

**THREATENING TRIO FROM THE MIDDLE EAST:  
THE ROGUE NATION, UNSTABLE ALLY REGIMES, AND TERRORISM**

by  
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## **Abstract**

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Historically, the United States has perceived rogue nations, unstable ally regimes, and terrorism as threats from the Middle East to its national security. With changing times, these threats require routine evaluations to ensure its validity. This thesis is a broad assessment of these threats as chapter one examines the effects of American coercive policy on the rogue nation Iran and hypothesizes that more coercive policies will make Iran more aggressive toward the U.S. Chapter two measures the fragility of Bahrain, one of America's closest ally regimes in the Gulf, to assess its most destabilizing internal issues and their effect on the security of U.S. military bases there. Chapter three focuses on the threat of terrorism by measuring the threat of western foreign fighters to carry out terrorist attacks within the U.S. because there is concern among U.S. policymakers regarding the rising number of westerns joining the Islamic State Organization (IS) in Syria and Iraq.

Chapter one assesses coercive policies toward rogue nations and finds that American coercive policies have resulted in more aggressive rogue nations that continue their nuclear program against U.S. opposition. Examining the effects of coercive foreign policies used toward North Korea, the U.S. should continue cooperative agreements with Iran to prevent further opposition. Chapter two measures the fragility of Bahrain using the Fragile State Index and found that Bahrain's fragility had increased every consecutive year since 2011 due to three major destabilizing issues. Rising instability in the country exacerbates the possibility that non-state groups target U.S. military installations in their struggle against the Al-Khalifa regime as U.S. bases have been targeted in the past.

Chapter three measures western foreign fighter involvement in terrorist attacks carried out in the U.S. and uses the Global Terrorism database (GTD) to find that the threat of western foreign fighters to carry out terrorist attacks within the U.S. has been overstated by the American media and policymakers.

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## **Introduction**

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This thesis portfolio is a broad assessment of threats to the U.S. from the Middle East including rogue nations, unstable ally regimes, and terrorism and focuses on the threats of Iran, Bahrain's instability, and the ability of foreign fighters to carry out terrorist attacks within the U.S. As rogue nations, unstable ally regimes, and terrorism are traditionally considered to be threats from the region, it is vital that these threats be regularly assessed to better ensure its validity. The first chapter answers the question, "How does coercive American foreign policy affect Iran, specifically its nuclear program?" The second chapter measures Bahrain's fragility to investigate the question, "What issues are the most destabilizing to Bahrain, and to what extent do these issues threaten the safety and security of U.S. bases inside the country?" The third chapter measures the threat of western foreign fighters by answering the question, "How likely is it that western foreign fighters can carry out terrorist attacks within the U.S.?"

Not only does this portfolio highlight the possibility of overstatement for some of these threats to the U.S. but it also timely considering the recent Iranian nuclear deal and the continuing Middle East conflict that's perceived as threats to U.S. interests. Iran and the increasing number of western foreign fighters heading to the conflict in the Middle East have been a major concern of the Obama Administration, Congress, and intelligence community. Additionally, the stability of Bahrain is a concern as it houses America's primary naval headquarters in the region. While these threats continue to evolve, it is important that policy makers consider various perspectives, historical trends, and factual

data—this portfolio provides that. The news media tends to focus on and heighten threats from the Middle East region but it is vital that policymakers and the public not be overly influenced by the media's perception of what constitutes the most pressing issues faced by the U.S. Public opinion on these issues can be sensitive and swayed by media coverage so it crucial that more literature on these perceived threats be available for public consumption.

Chapter one examines the effects of coercive U.S. foreign policy toward Iran's nuclear ambitions and finds that coercive policy used toward rogue nations such as Iran make the country more aggressive and determined to continue its nuclear ambitions despite Western opposition. The chapter explores Iran's domestic politics and discusses its nuclear ambitions and support for terrorism as it is referred to as a rogue state. There is fundamental divide within Iran between the hardliners including the Supreme leader and the moderates including pragmatic politicians and a large portion of its population. Hardliners have traditionally supported opposition toward the U.S. and nuclear development while the country's citizens and moderate leaders urge the nation to mend relations with the West and continue nuclear negotiations. The chapter uses a comparative case study with N. Korea to provide policy guidance for U.S. policymakers and highlight ineffective policies, as Korea ultimately became a nuclear power. Although Iran and N. Korea differ in some ways, N. Korea provides a baseline or path forward that U.S. policymakers should consider when addressing policy options for rogue states such as Iran.



Peace in the Middle East has been a long-standing goal of national policymakers and international peace organizations for decades and has been for good reason. Following the Arab Spring, instability in the Middle East is concerning as its governments encounter problems with protecting its people and its people sometimes need protection from their governments. The region's instability poses a threat to many of America's allies in the region, which in turn threatens American interests. It is crucial that the stability of American allies in the Middle East remain under constant observation as many of these countries have a significant U.S. military presence within their borders. Chapter two measures Bahrain's fragility to assess its most damaging issues and their threat to U.S. military bases. This chapter uses the Fund for Peace Fragile State Index to measure the fragility of Bahrain and observe its suitability for American facilities.

Moving on from Iran and Bahrain, the third chapter assesses the threat of western foreign fighters to carry out terrorist attacks in the U.S. While a foreign fighter is someone who leaves their home country to fight abroad independent of their country, this paper focuses on western foreign fighters from the U.S. who engage in military training, fighting, and activities using terrorist tactics outside of the west. Using this perspective, the chapter measures western foreign fighter involvement in terrorist attacks carried out in the U.S.

The first chapter's comparative case study provided a policy baseline that U.S. policymakers should utilize as they aim to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. The study found that coercive policies made rogue nations more aggressive and more

determined to continue its nuclear ambitions despite Western opposition. This aggressive response suggests that more cooperative, non-coercive policies be used with Iran if the U.S. hopes to prevent a nuclear Iran from occurring. The second chapter measures Bahrain's fragility and finds that it has increased every consecutive year since 2011, especially issues pertaining to state legitimacy, human rights and the rule of law, and group grievances. Bahraini terrorist groups have targeted security forces and U.S. military installations in the past, and these growing issues increase the likelihood that these tactics can increase in severity and occurrence as instability continues to increase. Additionally, Bahrain's most destabilizing issues provide a framework that American policymakers can utilize when creating recommendations for the Bahraini government. The third chapter focuses on the threat of western foreign fighters to carry out attacks in the U.S. and finds that it has been overstated, as western foreign fighters have been less likely to successfully carry out terrorist attacks in the U.S. Using the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) database and compiling data on all terrorist attacks (jihadi inspired and non-jihadi inspired) that have occurred in the U.S. from 1991 and 2013 as well as a Heritage Foundation study, the chapter finds that homegrown terrorism is more likely to occur.

## **Chapter One. The Iranian Rogue Nation**

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### **Introduction**

Every year, Gallup asks Americans which country is the U.S.'s greatest enemy and Americans have chosen Iran every consecutive year since 2006 until China rose above in 2014 followed by Russia in 2015.<sup>1</sup> Although Americans still hold unfavorable views toward Iran, the country's perceived threat among Americans has lowered in comparison to Russia, China, and North Korea since 2014.<sup>2</sup> While there could a number of reasons for this lowered threat perception, it is reasonable to suggest that re-opened communication lines and nuclear negotiations play a role. Despite the recent nuclear deal reached by Iran, the U.S. and other P5+1 nations, members of Congress continue to fight the deal in favor of strengthening sanctions on the country, a coercive policy that has been imposed by the U.S. since the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Assessing rouge nations such as Iran and their responses to coercive U.S. foreign policy would be useful for American policymakers by providing a perspective that policymakers can utilize to make more informed decisions on the use of sanctions to curb Iran's program as well as what is more effective in preventing nations like Iran from obtaining nuclear weaponry. This paper examined the question, "How does coercive American foreign policy affect Iran, specifically its nuclear program?" It was found that

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Winter. USA Today, "Poll: China, not Iran, now USA's top enemy." Last modified February 20, 2014. Accessed March 31, 2014. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/02/20/china-iran-enemy-gallup-poll/5651915/>. Jones, Jeffrey. (2015). Americans Increasingly See Russia as Threat, Top U.S. Enemy. Gallup. Retrieved August 3, 2015, from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/181568/americans-increasingly-russia-threat-top-enemy.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

coercive foreign policy used toward Iran, particularly toward its nuclear program, made it more aggressive and determined to continue its nuclear ambitions despite Western opposition.

Coercion is the “use of threats to influence the behavior of another (usually a target state but occasionally a non-state actor) by making it choose to comply rather than directly forcing it to comply (i.e. by brute force)” and includes tools such the threat to use military power and economic sanctions<sup>3</sup>. Examining America’s coercive foreign policy toward Iran not only helps to assess the capability of Iran to normalize relations with the U.S. but it is also timely as Congress debates over whether to support the nuclear deal or heighten sanctions. The U.S. and Iran have been enemies since the 1979 as Iran sponsors terrorism throughout the Middle East region. The country’s nuclear capability is another issue that supports unstable relations with the U.S. and great international concern. On July 14, 2015, U.S. negotiators announced that a nuclear deal had been reached, and although the U.S. currently awaits Congress’ approval, if implemented, the deal will lift sanctions that will expand the Iranian economy and potentially its regional influence and state sponsorship of terrorism. Any insight on the effects of American foreign policy toward Iran is useful as Congress decides whether or not to support the deal.

This chapter will first discuss Iran as a rogue state, its nuclear program, and its domestic policy. Next, a comparative case study methodology of North Korea (N. Korea), another rogue nation, will be utilized to observe the effects of America’s nuclear policy on N. Korea to provide a baseline for a path forward with Iran. Lastly, an

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<sup>3</sup> Quote. Bratton, Patrick. (2005). WHEN IS COERCION SUCCESSFUL? U.S. Naval War College Review, 58(3). Retrieved from <https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/4e9e93e3-50b9-4fe9-b6e8-c7aca4218a9b/When-Is-Coercion-Successful--And-Why-Can-t-We-Agre.aspx>

indication of useful policies toward rogue nations will follow that American policymakers should consider when creating policy of nuclear strength toward the Islamic Republic. I hypothesize that coercive American policies toward Iran will make the regime more aggressive in its nuclear program despite Western opposition; therefore the U.S. should not use coercion to prevent a rogue nation from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

## **Defining a Rogue State**

*Iran, Iraq, North Korea and their allies "constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world," Bush stated as he spoke of these countries sponsoring terrorism and pursuing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)<sup>4</sup>.*

While Bush made this statement in 2002, little has changed with the exception Iraq as the U.S invaded the country and overthrew Saddam Hussein's reign. Nevertheless, N. Korea and Iran remain sponsors of terrorism with interests in nuclear capability that has been of great concern to the U.S. Throughout literature and statements made by policymakers, Iran and N. Korea are commonly referred to as rogue states, exhibiting opposition to the existing "society of states" by denying or rejecting common interests and existing international rules and frameworks.<sup>5</sup> These states are seen as threats to global peace as they seek proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and sponsor terrorism. Most academics agree that a rogue state has involvement

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<sup>4</sup> Gilmore, Gerry. (2005, March 18). United States Department of Defense News Article: Bush's 'Axis of Evil' Speech Put Iraq on Notice. Retrieved August 3, 2015, from <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=31166>

<sup>5</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchial Society: A Study of Order in World Politics.*, (New York: Columbia University Press).

in terrorism, poses a military threat, challenges international norms, and seeks weapons or mass destruction capabilities.<sup>6</sup>

While all rogue nations may exhibit the characteristics listed above, all countries with these characteristics may not necessarily be labeled rogue. For example, Israel and India both sought nuclear power despite Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) limitations so a country's aspiration of possessing nuclear weapons is not a sole qualifier. Academics such as Robert Dujarric, the Director of the Institute of Contemporary Asian Studies, argue that a negative perception of a country's values is a guiding factor in achieving this label as with authoritarian states.<sup>7</sup> Dujarric says that while rogue states are negatively perceived, key rogue states all tend to be "small or medium nations that have achieved some success in thwarting American policy."<sup>8</sup> It is not merely a state's values or governmental system such as authoritarian states and its violations against human rights alone, otherwise countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt would have label rogue states as well.<sup>9</sup> The term was applied to Iran initially due to its sponsorship of terrorism as the country supports terrorist groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthi rebels in Yemen, and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the CIA holds that sponsorship of terrorism is supported by the regime as it is a way to export the revolution against

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Dujarric. "North Korea: Risks and rewards of engagement." *Journal of International Affairs- Columbia University*. 54, no. 2 (2001): 465-488.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Eke, Surulola James. (2014). Rethinking US Policy Towards Iran's Nuclear Programme. *Central European Journal Of International & Security Studies*, 8(4), 38-49.

oppressor states.<sup>11</sup> Despite the term's relationship with terrorism, it is significant because it evokes Western hostility, especially toward Iran's uranium enrichment program.<sup>12</sup>

## **Iran's Nuclear Program**

Iran has shown an interest in nuclear energy since 1957; Its nuclear program was initially supported by the U.S as Iran signed the NPT in 1968 and entered an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>13</sup> Iran signed contracts with French and German firms to construct its nuclear plants and supply nuclear fuel in the 1970's while the U.S. provided nuclear technology, supplied nuclear reactor fuel, supported Iranian scientists, and supervised the construction of Iran's Bushehr nuclear station under the Shah's regime.<sup>14</sup> Although the U.S. supported its program in the beginning, support began to decline "after U.S. intelligence forces suggested in 1974 that the Shah's ambitions could lead Iran to pursue nuclear weapons."<sup>15</sup>

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and Iran-Iraq War, the view of the U.S drastically changed.<sup>16</sup> Iran continued its program in the early 1990's until it suspended it

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control. "A History of Iran's Nuclear Program." A History of Iran's Nuclear Program. <http://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/weapon-program-background-report/history-irans-nuclear-program> (accessed May 6, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Eke, Surulola James. (2014). Rethinking US Policy Towards Iran's Nuclear Programme.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control. "A History of Iran's Nuclear Program." A History of Iran's Nuclear Program. <http://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/weapon-program-background-report/history-irans-nuclear-program> (accessed May 6, 2014).

again in 2003 when the IAEA discovered its uranium enrichment capabilities.<sup>17</sup> It restarted operations again in 2005, and in 2006, the U.N. Security Council imposed sanctions after Iran refused to stop its enrichment. Iran began negotiations in 2009, although it has consistently refused to give up its enrichment programs.<sup>18</sup> In 2012, the IAEA reported high stockpiles of enriched uranium sparking international pressure resulting in current negotiations.

## **Iran's Domestic Politics**

To understand Iran's foreign policy and the American response, an examination of Iran's domestic politics should be made. Although Iranian politics are not as transparent as democracies, literature notes that a political separation between Iranian elites exist over the "fundamental difference of whether the country should continue as a rouge state willing to defy the world, or whether it should settle down and become a normal state that plays by international rules."<sup>19</sup> This same political division is illustrated among Iranian policymakers who support and oppose the nuclear deal. President Rouhani has made significant liberal policy proposals and the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has spoken of "heroic flexibility" as he stated that Iran is<sup>20</sup>

"not against proper and rational diplomatic moves, be it in the diplomatic sphere, or the sphere of domestic politics...your servant believes in what was coined

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control. "A History of Iran's Nuclear Program."

<sup>19</sup> Shahram Chubin. The United States Institute of Peace, "The Politics of Iran's Nuclear Program." Accessed March 10, 2014. <http://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/politics-irans-nuclear-program>.

<sup>20</sup> Bridget Marie Heing, *Iranian Democracy: A Century of Struggle, Setback, and Progress*. (PhD diss., Washington University, 2013), Electronic Theses and Dissertations (1208). 92.



years ago: ‘heroic flexibility.’ Flexibility is necessary on certain occasions. It is very beneficial.”<sup>21</sup>

Despite President Rouhani’s progressive attempts, Iranian hardliners have consistently pushed back.<sup>22</sup> Amid the nuclear negotiation, Iranian headlines noted the growing criticism among Rouhani’s right-wing opponents and activists who claimed Iran’s nuclear negotiating team continuously ignored the country’s national interest.<sup>23</sup> Iran’s hierarchy and the “intractability of the defenders of Iran’s religious orthodoxy [hardliners]—among them the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have been an obstacle.”<sup>24</sup>

The most important and powerful figure in Iran is Supreme Leader, Khamenei, and although he has made reformist statements in support of President Rouhani, he has never delineated away from his role of Supreme Leader (i.e. Leader of the Revolution) and has blocked reformist policy in many cases. Khamenei remained somewhat neutral during the nuclear talks but addressed six redlines that Iran’s nuclear negotiators could not cross including:

1. Iran’s “scientific and nuclear movement should not be stopped in any way or slowed down;”

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<sup>21</sup> Tehran Bureau, “Iran: Hello diplomacy, so long Martyrdom.” Last modified Sept. 21, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/iran-blog/2013/sept21/iran-heroic-flexibility-diplomacy-martyrdom>.

<sup>22</sup> Bridget Marie Heing, *Iranian Democracy: A Century of Struggle, Setback, and Progress*.

<sup>23</sup> Quote Simon Tisdall. "Hassan Rouhani faces growing criticism in Iran over nuclear talks." [theGuardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/04/hassan-rouhani-iran-nuclear-talks). <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/04/hassan-rouhani-iran-nuclear-talks> (accessed May 4, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Quote. Suzanne Maloney. Brookings Institute. “Iran Surprises itself and the World.” Last modified 2013. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/iran-surprises-itself-and-the-world-a>

2. Tehran's negotiators must insist on the continuation of nuclear advancement, research, and development;
3. No one has the right trade the country's nuclear achievements and no one will do so;
4. "Officials must be vigilant in regards to the defense of nuclear achievements;"
5. Iran's negotiators should not accept bullying from the other side;
6. And "relations between Iran and the IAEA should be normalized and on a non-extraordinary basis."<sup>25</sup>

### *Iran's Demographics*

Iran's changing demographics are another influential aspect of the country's political atmosphere. The majority of its population is under the age of 30 and shares a completely different perspective than the very small group of clerics who founded the Republic in 1979.<sup>26</sup> The younger generation tends to be more liberal or reformist, as they grew up during the 1990's, a period when Iranians pushed back against rigid restrictions such as dress code.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the election of moderate Rouhani and his accomplishments thus far "reflects a level of pragmatism for which Iran is often not given credit."<sup>28</sup> Not to mention the previous election of former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami who received a large 70 percent of the public vote, as he similar to Rouhani supported a more reformist platform in 1997.<sup>29</sup> A majority of Iranians have shown

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<sup>25</sup> The United States Institute of Peace. "The Iran Primer: Khamenei's Red Lines on Nuclear Talks." Khamenei's Red Lines on Nuclear Talks. <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2014/apr/16/khamenei%E2%80%99s-red-lines-nuclear-talks> (accessed May 1, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Bridget Marie Heing, *Iranian Democracy: A Century of Struggle, Setback, and Progress*. 102.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Heing, *Iranian Democracy*. 100.

<sup>29</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Mohammad Khatami." Last modified August 23, 2013. Accessed April 8, 2014. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/316504/Mohammad-Khatami>.

support for reformist presidents as the 2013 presidential election received high voter turnout of 73 percent, and Rouhani secured 50.7 percent of the popular vote while the second contender only received 16 percent.<sup>30</sup> Even considering the reelection of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and its resulting protests illustrates a public Iranian support for reform as Ahmadinejad was highly conservative with low approval ratings

As new generations assume positions of power within the government, the potential for change is more likely. When one reminisces on Iranian-U.S. past relations and the overthrow of its democratically elected leader Mossadegh in 1953, democracy is not guaranteed but remains an option. In addition to a more liberal and younger generation, Iranian public opinion has shown “less support for the nuclear program” over time.<sup>31</sup> Not only do Iranians believe that the pursuit of nuclear weapons impedes their desire for peace but they also make distinctions between weaponization and nuclear technology.<sup>32</sup> While the majority of Iranians believe that access to nuclear technology it is a national right, they also believe that nuclear weapons would make Iran less safe.<sup>33</sup>

### *Historical Policy Review*

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<sup>30</sup> Bozorgmehr, Shirzad, and Michael Martinez. "Hassan Rouhani is Iran's next president after appealing to tradition, reform." CNN. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/15/world/meast/iran-elections/> (accessed May 4, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Michael Herzog. "Iranian Public Opinion on the Nuclear Program A Potential Asset for the International Community." Policy Focus: 3-6. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus56.pdf> (accessed ).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.4

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

Throughout historical and academic literature, various examinations of U.S.-Iranian relations have been made as well as recommended policies toward Iran. Although the U.S. forced regime change in Iran and overthrew Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mossadegh in the 1953' coup d'etat, it has traditionally used a policy of containment against the country since 1979.<sup>34</sup> Containment is a policy that aims to stop the expansion of an enemy state or the expansion of its influence as Executive Vice President of the Brookings Institution Martin Indyk discusses America's support of Sunni countries in the region in opposition to the Shiite Iran. By supporting Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey, the U.S. has created a strong balance against Iran in the region.<sup>35</sup> The U.S. has strengthened ties to the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations as well as increased arms and fighter aircraft sales to states in the region.<sup>36</sup> As these states are neighbors of Iran, many of them house military bases that "supply an embryonic skeleton for any future regional security structure that could be used to contain the threat posed by a potentially nuclear Iran."<sup>37</sup>

Within the U.S.' policy of containment, the use of sanctions to weaken Iran has been an integral staple of U.S. coercive policy in hopes that its population would rise against the theocratic regime. There have been continuous sanctions placed on Iran since its revolution when the country's estimated 12 billion worth of assets were frozen in

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<sup>34</sup> Korb, Lawrence. J. (2010). The Iranian quagmire: How to move forward. *Bulletin Of The Atomic Scientists*, 66(6), 95-101. doi:10.1177/0096340210387502

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> GOLDMAN, Zachary. K., & RAPP-HOOPER, M. (2013). Conceptualizing Containment: The Iranian Threat and the Future of Gulf Security. *Political Science Quarterly* (Wiley-Blackwell), 128(4), 590. doi:10.1002/polq.12139

<sup>37</sup> Quote. Ibid. 592.

November 1979.<sup>38</sup> It was later followed by a U.S. ban to export or import any goods or services from Iran in 1987 and in 2005, the assets of any individual with ties to Iran's nuclear program was frozen.<sup>39</sup> While other countries such as Australia, India, Canada, South Korea, Switzerland, and the European Union followed suit, the United Nations Security Council imposed a resolution that "prohibited the supply of nuclear-related materials and technology to Iran and also froze the assets of individuals connected with Iran's nuclear program."<sup>40</sup>

Iran and the U.S. are both responsible for unstable relations as Lawrence Korb, a senior advisor to the Center for Defense Information, observed American's historical policy toward Iran and noted instances in which the U.S. undermined Iran stabilization including (1) the Iranian coup d'état; (2) supporting the Iraqi invasion of Iran in the 1980s and not condemning Saddam Hussein's for his use of chemical weapons (3) referring to Iran as an axis of evil under the Bush Administration despite their cooperation and assistance with ousting the Taliban from Afghanistan; (4) undermining America's position on nuclear proliferation by allowing Israel and India to house nuclear weapons in the region without signing the NPT.<sup>41</sup> Korb says the U.S. should acknowledge its past decisions and the role it's played in the Iranian perspective against America. He says that the U.S. should remain open to nuclear negotiations with Iran while maintaining a policy of containment, as it proved useful during the Cold War.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Eke, Surulola James. (2014). Rethinking US Policy Towards Iran's Nuclear Programme, 47.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 47-48.

<sup>41</sup> Korb, Lawrence. J. (2010). The Iranian quagmire: How to move forward

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

### *Recommended Policy Review*

Aside from containment strategies, Henry Kissinger recommended an interesting policy option for rogue nations that has yet to be utilized by the U.S. toward Iran. Although the U.S. has continuously used coercive policies to include the threat of military force toward Iran's nuclear program, there has never been war between the two countries, although the U.S. supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war against the Islamic Republic. Kissinger recommends war as the best option for rogue states that intend to destroy the established international order as his theory groups the global order into two camps including status quo powers and opposition states including rogue nations. He holds that status quo powers interact with countries such as Iran by forcing them to adapt to familiar frameworks that these countries fail to see as legitimate.<sup>43</sup> He says war is the most permanent policy option when handling rogue states.<sup>44</sup> With war, regime change can be forced. While Kissinger has not explicitly stated that U.S. should go to war with Iran, his theory recommends war as a permanent option for rogue nations such as Iran. As the U.S. recuperates from conflict fatigue as a result of the Iraqi invasion, the use of sanctions toward Iran have been overwhelmingly supported by the American public rather than war.

Historian Daniel Larison disagrees that containment and war are good policy options for Iran and argues that a negotiated settlement and more non-coercive policies

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<sup>43</sup> Kaplan, Robert. "Living With a Nuclear Iran." *The Atlantic*. N.p., 11 Aug 2010. Web. 10 Feb 2014. <<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/09/living-with-a-nuclear-iran/308193/>>.

<sup>44</sup> Yanover, Yori, "Kissinger Predicts War with Iran: Henry Kissinger on Iran," at the WSJ CEO Council, Web, <http://www.jewishpress.com/tv/video-picks/kissinger-predicts-nuclear-war-with-iran/2013/10/24/>.

toward Iran would prove more useful in getting the country to give up its nuclear program.<sup>45</sup> In light of the recent nuclear deal and the previous ongoing nuclear negotiations that extended three deadlines and undergone four extensions since 2013, Larison's suggestion for negotiation was effective in reaching a deal despite some policymakers pushing for coercive sanctions throughout the negotiation. The current nuclear deal aims to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon for another ten years.

Despite containment strategies and economic sanctions used on Iran, the country's nuclear program continues to gain international concern pertaining to its proximity to nuclear weaponry. Those in Congress against a deal along with foreign allies in the Middle East region hold the deal as a play for time that will allow Iran to expand its influence and supply greater sponsorship to terrorism and convert means to a nuclear weapon. Another concern of a nuclear capable Iran is the possibility of nuclear weapons and technology getting into the hands of non- state terrorist organizations as Iran a state sponsor of terrorism to groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. Ariel Ilan Roth support that Iran is a rational state actor that can be trusted with a nuclear weapon, other 'nuclear pessimists' view Iran as an irrational actor with a theocratic dictatorship, untrustworthy of responsible nuclear possession, thereby threatening MAD deterrence.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Larison, Daniel. The American Conservative, "The "Martyr-State" Myth and the "Consensus" on Iran That Never Was." Last modified Dec 12, 2013. Accessed March 10, 2014. <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-martyr-state-myth-and-the-consensus-on-iran-that-never-was/>.

<sup>46</sup> Ariel Roth. "The Root of all Fears: Why is Israel so Afraid of Iranian Nukes?" Foreign Affairs. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65692/ariel-ilan-roth/the-root-of-all-fears> Ofira Seliktar, "Assessing Iran's Nuclear Rationality: The "Eye of the Beholder" Problem," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 2, no. 2 (2011): 186-202, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21520844.2011.616942>

One thing is clear, a nuclear Iran challenges regional stability and can spur nuclear proliferation in the Middle East as neighboring states, especially Saudi Arabia, have shared concerns and plans to compete to maintain better enhance their security. Considering the pre-emptive nature of the U.S. ally Israel, Israeli airstrikes against Iran could pull the U.S. into another Middle Eastern conflict. While there are various threats posed by a nuclear seeking and capable Iran, the current deal, although awaiting Congressional and Iranian acceptance is a step closer toward resolving this issue.

## **Comparative Case Study**

Whether the U.S. decides to implement the nuclear deal or reject it to continue sanctions, it must seriously assess the effects of U.S. coercive policies on Iran to determine the most effective options to prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons. One comparative example is N. Korea as it too engaged in nuclear negotiations with the U.S. and is labeled as a rogue state. Evaluating the historical policy used toward N. Korea and its effects can provide a baseline for observing effective or ineffective policies for rogue nations engaged in nuclear negotiations with the U.S.

While N. Korea is a communist state under the rule of dictator Kim Jong Un, Iran is an theocratic republic with the Supreme Leader Ali Hoseini-Khamenei who has more power than the Iranian president and legislative branch.<sup>47</sup> Unlike N. Korea, the U.S. once shared strong relations with Iran following the 1953 coup d'etat until 1979, but its

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<sup>47</sup> CIA World Factbook. "North Korea." <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kn.html> ;  
CIA World Factbook. "Iran." <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>



relations with N. Korea have been strained relations since the end of WWII when the Soviet Union occupied N. Korea.<sup>48</sup> While both countries are known as rogue and axis of evil countries, both have also heightened international concern pertaining to nuclear non-proliferation. Iran has never publicized an interest in obtaining a nuclear weapon and claims that it is only interested in nuclear energy while N. Korea has publicized and even leveraged its nuclear weapon capabilities for concessions.

N. Korea has advanced its nuclear weapon capability since the 1990's and intended to withdraw from the NPT in 1993.<sup>49</sup> Following its publicized intent to withdraw, it entered into an Agreed Framework with the U.S. to receive aid in exchange for freezing its illegal plutonium program; nevertheless, the program collapsed in 2002 and N. Korea officially announced its withdrawal from the NPT in 2003.<sup>50</sup> N. Korea and Iran both entered into negotiations over its nuclear program in return for concessions with N. Korea requesting aid and light water nuclear energy construction and Iran requesting economic sanction alleviation.<sup>51</sup>

Scott Synder, the Director of the program on U.S.- Korea policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, finds that N. Korea followed a 'crisis oriented negotiation style' that used its nuclear potential and threats as a bargaining chip; it requests non-aggressive pacts and bilateral agreements with the U.S. and a normalization of relations while the

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<sup>48</sup> CIA World Factbook." North Korea

<sup>49</sup> Roland Bleiker, "A rogue is a rogue is a rogue: US foreign policy and the Korean nuclear crisis," *International Affairs*, 79, no. 4 (2003): 719-737,

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Roland Bleiker, "A rogue is a rogue is a rogue: bid.

U.S. demands multilateral agreements and disarmament before normalization<sup>52</sup>. Roland Bleiker, a professor of International relations and Korean politics at the University of Queensland, notes that U.S. behavior was also threatening throughout the negotiations including America's placement of nuclear weapons in South Korea near the northern border; nuclear weapons training exercises in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ); and threats of pre-emptive strikes made during the Bush Administration.<sup>53</sup> In 2000, U.S.-Iran talks covered nuclear transparency and normalization as President Clinton weighed the option to go visit the country.<sup>54</sup> When President Bush took office in 2001, the atmosphere changed as the new administration was more skeptical and worried about nuclear verification which sparked increased N. Korean opposition.<sup>55</sup> Tensions continued to grow as Bush referred to the nation as an axis of evil in 2002 and N. Korea began to use threatening rhetoric as a result until later that year, a N. Korea clandestine nuclear weapons program was discovered which violated the framework agreement.<sup>56</sup>

Bleiker notes that N. Korea seemed more cooperative during the first nuclear crisis in 1992 but as the U.S. became more aggressive, it became more antagonistic leading up until its public announcement to continue its nuclear ambitions along with a return of hostile rhetoric in 2002.<sup>57</sup> Overall, N. Korea seeks to maintain its nuclear power

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<sup>52</sup> Scott Snyder. *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean negotiating Behavior* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> Roland Bleiker, "A rogue is a rogue is a rogue: US foreign policy and the Korean nuclear crisis,"

<sup>54</sup> Arms Control Association. (n.d.). Fact Sheets & Briefs. Retrieved August 12, 2015, from <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/dprkchron>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Roland Bleiker, "A rogue is a rogue is a rogue: US foreign policy and the Korean nuclear crisis

as a deterrent against attacks and uses its nuclear power as a bargaining chip.<sup>58</sup> Although it is unknown whether N. Korea fully intended to continue nuclear weapon intentions throughout the talks, one must not ignore the use of American coercion toward N. Korea resulted in heightened opposition from N. Korea and a nuclear N. Korean state.

The Iranian situation differs from N. Korea in that the U.S. initially supported Iran's nuclear program and supplied the country with its first nuclear reactor, the Tehran Research Reactor or TRR, in 1967.<sup>59</sup> While it supported Iran's program under Shah Pahlavi, it switched stances after the Iranian revolution and hostage crisis of 1979. Iran halted its nuclear program after the revolution but continued to acquire nuclear technology on the black market from the Abdul Qadeer Khan Network (i.e. a Pakistan based network headed by Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear program) in 1987.<sup>60</sup> The U.S. Congress passed the Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act in 1992 which prohibited support of Iran's proliferation of advanced weapons and the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (or the Iran Sanctions Act) in 1996 which prohibited any American or foreign investment over 20 million in Iran's energy sector.<sup>61</sup>

## Discussion

Although it has not been publically confirmed whether Iran seeks nuclear weapon capability, the U.S. Institute of Peace, stated that Iran's nuclear program is an "attempt to

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<sup>58</sup> Scott Snyder. *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean negotiating Behavior*

<sup>59</sup> Iran, U.S. Push Nuclear Diplomacy. (2013, October 1). Arms Control Association. Retrieved from [https://armscontrol.org/act/2013\\_10/Iran-US-Push-Nuclear-Diplomacy](https://armscontrol.org/act/2013_10/Iran-US-Push-Nuclear-Diplomacy)

<sup>60</sup> Pan, Esther. (2004, February 12). NONPROLIFERATION: The Pakistan Network. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from <http://www.cfr.org/proliferation/nonproliferation-pakistan-network/p7751>

<sup>61</sup> Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran. (2015)

become more self-reliant in arms and technology” and is “ a byproduct of the troubled revolution’s omnipresent need for legitimacy and Iranian nationalism’s quest for respect and international status.” Despite Iran public objection to nuclear weaponry, it has sparked concern in the international community, notably the U.S., China, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>62</sup> Although coercive sanctions placed against the regime have negatively impacted its economy, Iran has continued to advance its nuclear capabilities.

Khamenei spoke of the existence of sanctions and international pressure on Tehran for false reasons of human rights violations and nuclear achievements and notes that the West “will always find an excuse, therefore the only way is to continue our [Iran’s] path of progress with complete power is to stand up against their [Western] bullying.”<sup>63</sup> Although the sanctions have crippled Iran’s economy, they have been ineffective in changing the country’s nuclear drive, and Iran has even spoken of creating an ‘economy of resistance’ that would neutralize the effects of sanctions.<sup>64</sup> Considering this, Larison’s suggestion to use non-coercive methods against Iran to settle the nuclear dispute may be more effective than U.S’ coercive policy thus far.

Taking N. Korea’s past negotiations into account, negotiated settlements failed to prevent the country from obtaining a nuclear weapon, which was the ultimate goal of the U.S. It is important to note that despite the nuclear talks, the U.S. never took coercion off

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<sup>62</sup> Iran, U.S. Push Nuclear Diplomacy. (2013, October 1).

<sup>63</sup> Quote. The United States Institute of Peace. "The Iran Primer: Khamenei’s Red Lines on Nuclear Talks".

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

the table as Bleiker notes the use of U.S. military intimidation which could have negatively affected the N. Korean perspective aside from its initial intentions. Although it is unknown whether N. Korea fully intended to be a nuclear power or sought only nuclear capability, initially, the U.S.' use of coercive negotiations resulted in a nuclear enemy. With that being said, the comparative study with N. Korea illustrates that coercive U.S. policy toward the rogue nation failed. The study also provides two options that the U.S. has not previously utilized against rogue nations with nuclear ambitions including (1) pure non-coercive negotiations and (2) brute force. No one knows for certain which option would ensure that Iran never gets a nuclear weapon, but this comparative case study does identify the ineffectiveness of coercive negotiation policies such as those used with N. Korea in preventing nuclear acquisition. As some in Congress call for coercive sanctions rather than a nuclear deal, policymakers should consider policies based on historical failures to avoid making the same mistakes. Einstein once stated that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result, and policymakers should take heed.

### *The Path Forward*

Looking to the statements made by Khamenei and other Iranian conservative hardliners, one idea is evident, although Iran has reopened communication, Khamenei has repeatedly stated that Iran will not tolerate bullying or coercion from Western states. Khamenei's warning should be regarded with caution considering that past coercive negotiations with N. Korea failed. Long-term cooperation and negotiation techniques

could be more effective policy options toward rogue states when settling nuclear program/ambition concerns. Although some policy strategists such as Kissinger note that war is an effective option to change the policy of states like Iran, a lack of public support coupled with the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq have made the option of war (or use of brute force) less likely. Larison's idea of long-term cooperative negotiations with Iran is the best option learning from past failures in preventing rogue nations from obtaining a nuclear weapon. This includes financial coercion also as Khomeini made his stance clear in the midst of Iran's faltering economy that the effects of sanctions cannot be a guiding force when assessing Iranian policy and can be counter-acted by building relations with non-western partners such as China and increasing self-sufficiency.<sup>65</sup>

Iran seems to be more cooperative when negotiated settlement policy options are utilized rather than coercion. Based on N. Korea, utilizing coercive policies toward a rogue Iran is a risk that can result in a more determined Iran that seeks to enhance its nuclear capability; further solidifying the threat it poses to American interests and allies in the Middle East. Considering the progress achieved with the nuclear deal and Iran's adherence to the restrictions of the interim deal that was implemented during negotiations that limited its uranium enrichment and redesigned "its Arak heavy water reactor to greatly limit the amount of plutonium it can make, [which is] a major concession," cooperation between the U.S. and Iran is not an impossible idea to consider.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Simon Tisdall. "Hassan Rouhani faces growing criticism in Iran over nuclear talks."

<sup>66</sup> Associated Press. "Report: Nuclear inspectors to visit Iranian sites." Fox News. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/05/04/report-inspectors-to-visit-2-sites-in-iran-as-official-says-other-promised/> (accessed May 6, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Discussing Iran's responses to coercive American foreign policy is important as the country funds terrorism; has been perceived as an enemy of the U.S. since 1979; and houses nuclear capabilities that are of great concern. Looking to comparative examples such as N. Korea, another rogue nation with concerning nuclear ambitions, U.S. policy makers can learn from past negotiation styles and policies. The example of N. Korea provides policy guidance seeking to prevent rogue nations from acquiring nuclear weapon capabilities and provides a baseline for policies there were ineffective in stopping N. Korea from obtaining nuclear weaponry. Whenever the U.S. used coercion throughout the talks, the more aggressive N. Korea became in opposition to the U.S. and in support of its nuclear program until it eventually achieved nuclear status. As Iran, the U.S. and other P5+1 nations have reached a nuclear deal, continued cooperative policies should be used as coercive policies such as sanctions can strengthen the country's opposition and make it more dedicated in acquiring a nuke.

## **Chapter Two. Bahraini Fragility: An Assessment of Bahrain's Stability and the American Presence There**

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### **Introduction**

In March 2014, news media covered stories of Americans calling on the United States government for assistance in fleeing Yemen as domestic conflict continued to rise as a result of fighting between the Sunni al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Islamic State Organization, and the Shiite Houthi rebels.<sup>67</sup> While there were no American military bases in Yemen, there were some American forces located on the Yemen al-Annad air base. Unfortunately, the Department of State (DOS) reported that it was too dangerous to evacuate its citizens from Yemen.<sup>68</sup> Although the United States' evacuated its embassy personnel in February, some military personnel stayed behind. Early warning systems for regional instability are vital in ensuring that U.S. personnel are safe in countries with rising violence and domestic conflict.

In 2014, U.S. House Representative Hank Johnson, member of the Armed Services committee, stated that the instability and resulting violence in Bahrain is a threat to the U.S. military assets and personnel stationed there.<sup>69</sup> This paper examines the instability of Bahrain and the question, "What issues are the most destabilizing to Bahrain, and to what extent do they threaten the safety and security of American bases there?" By measuring Bahrain's fragility, this chapter finds that its most destabilizing

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<sup>67</sup> Elbagir, Nima. (2015, April 20). Stranded in Yemen: Americans left to find own way out - CNN.com. Retrieved July 19, 2015, from <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/20/middleeast/yemen-american-citizens-escape/>

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Johnson, Hank. (2014, July 22). Trouble with Bahrain. Retrieved June 16, 2015, from <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/212867-trouble-with-bahrain>



issues pertain to (1) state legitimacy, (2) human rights and the rule of law, and (3) group grievances; these issues will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. As Bahraini terrorist and opposition groups have targeted security forces and U.S. military installations in the past, these growing destabilizing issues can increase the likelihood that violence between security and resistance groups will follow.

The U.S. became heavily involved in the Middle East during WWII, mainly in competition against the Soviet Union, and has maintained relationships with a number of Middle Eastern countries to include member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC is made up of six member states to include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).<sup>70</sup> The U.S. maintains strong security cooperation with Bahrain as it was designated a Major non-NATO ally (MNNA) in 2002.<sup>71</sup> Bahrain, home to the U.S' Naval Fifth Fleet and Naval, shares close military cooperation with U.S. defense forces, and engages in large arms trade with the U.S.<sup>72</sup> Bahrain is important in maintaining our interests in the region and its instability is a concern that could impact its suitability to house a U.S. Naval Headquarters.

This chapter will first define state fragility before providing a brief explanation of Bahrain's importance to the U.S., especially as a military host country. Next, an academic literature review will discuss the major theoretical causes for instability in the Middle

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<sup>70</sup> El-Katiri, Mohammed. (2014, October 1). United States -Gulf Cooperation Council Security Cooperation in a Multipolar World. United States Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute Retrieved July 14, 2015, from

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB1225.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013; May 8, 2015), by Kenneth Katzman.. Accessed June 13, 2015. <http://fas.org:8080/sgp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf> . 20.

East, and a methodology portion will examine Bahrain's instability using the Fund for Peace Fragile State Index. The chapter will come to a conclusion after discussing the results of the index and overviewing the threat that its most destabilizing issues pose to U.S. bases.

## **State Fragility and Suitability**

This chapter measures Bahrain's fragility to determine the most destabilizing issues within Bahrain and their threat to the security of American bases. Before a measurement of fragility can be made, a comprehensive definition of the term is needed. While international recognition and defined borders are vital characteristics, a state must have a sovereign and legitimate governing authority. A state cannot be politically subject to another state and its government must be accepted by its population as the proper source of authority; this is what is meant by state sovereignty and governing legitimacy.<sup>73</sup> Governing bodies and leaders should have the basic legitimacy to rule, and state institutions should provide basic functions. In order for a government to govern its people and guard its borders, it must have the capacity and the support to do so, without which destabilization or aspects of state fragility can prosper. States are fragile when its "structures lack the political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

their populations.”<sup>74</sup> State fragility can further catalyze issues such as organized crime, violence, terrorist activity, armed conflict, etc.<sup>75</sup>

For the purpose of this chapter, state suitability is used to assess a country that houses American bases and helps to answer the question of to what extent Bahrain’s most destabilizing issues threaten the safety and security of U.S. military personnel and bases. Suitability focuses on the likelihood that these entities are targeted for violent or terrorist attacks. If U.S. military bases and personnel are routinely targeted within a host country, the host country is not suitable to house it. A suitable host country is stable and tends not to experience high targeting of U.S. bases or military personnel. By measuring Bahrain’s fragility and its potential for further exacerbating internal conflict such as increasing government opposition groups and sectarianism, one can better assess the safety of U.S. personnel and bases there.

America has multiple interests in the Gulf region as it is not only home to a third of the world’s natural gas reserves and half of the world’s oil reserves but it houses the Strait of Hormuz, a significant trade route.<sup>76</sup> The region also has growing financial powers that have gained importance in America’s international trade and investment sphere.<sup>77</sup> Bahrain has shared a free trade agreement with the U.S. since 2006.<sup>78</sup> While the

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<sup>74</sup> OECD. Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations. (2008). Retrieved July 18, 2015, from <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/conflictandfragility/docs/41100930.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> El-Katiri, Mohammed.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> U.S. Department of State Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Fact Sheet: U.S. Relations With Bahrain.

U.S. seeks to maintain some level of security cooperation with its closest GCC allies, the rising instability in the region is concerning.

## **Bahrain's Importance**

The U.S. established relations with Bahrain in 1971 after it declared independence from the United Kingdom and held an American naval headquarters there since 1948.<sup>79</sup> U.S.-Bahrain security cooperation evolved over the decades “in large part to keep Bahrain’s powerful neighbors in check, and Bahrain has placed its facilities at U.S. disposal to address threats from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, international terrorism, and piracy in the Gulf and Arabia Sea.”<sup>80</sup>

As previously mentioned that Bahrain is a close ally of the GCC, the GCC is a political and economic union of Gulf States and have traditionally been key partners of the U.S. in balancing the region against Iran and Iraq.<sup>81</sup> Although there is military cooperation between the U.S. and all six GCC member states, the U.S. has only designated Bahrain and Kuwait with MNNA status.<sup>82</sup> While MNNA designation does not secure the same security guarantees such as mutual defense that North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members receive, is only given to close allies with strong strategic

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<sup>79</sup> U.S. Department of State Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Fact Sheet: U.S. Relations With Bahrain.

CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013; May 8, 2015), by Kenneth Katzman.. Accessed June 13, 2015. <http://fas.org:8080/sgp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf> . 20.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> El-Katiri, Mohammed.

<sup>82</sup> Labott, Elise. (2015, May 8). White House looks to upgrade alliance with Gulf states - CNNPolitics.com. Retrieved July 18, 2015, from <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/08/politics/us-upgrade-status-gulf-allies/>

working relationships with American defense forces.<sup>83</sup> Not only are MNNA countries eligible for “certain kinds of military assistance with less restrictions on weapon sales but these countries can also participate in cooperative defense research and development projects that are typically not available to non-NATO countries.”<sup>84</sup>

Bahrain is a majority Shiite kingdom ruled under Sunni King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. The country’s Sunni ruling elite has caused tension with its Shiite majority population while Shiites are not adequately represented within the Council of Representatives (COR), the lower house of Bahrain’s government and have long complained of discrimination.<sup>85</sup> These tensions increased following the elections of 2002, 2006, and 2010 when a Sunni majority was appointed to the COR.<sup>86</sup> Protests increased following accusations toward the government for gerrymandering voting districts to support Sunni candidates and after 23 Shiite leaders were arrested under an anti-terrorism law.<sup>87</sup>

Following the toppling of President Mubarak in Egypt in 2011, large demonstrations took place calling for Al Khalifa to step-down or hand more power over to the parliament (or COR).<sup>88</sup> When demonstrations continued to grow, the Bahraini government requested support from its Sunni GCC neighbors who sent troops to help subdue the demonstrations

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<sup>83</sup> Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA). (n.d.). Retrieved July 1, 2015, from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/mnna.htm>

<sup>84</sup> Quote. Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA). (n.d.).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 1-3.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>88</sup> Gulf states send forces to Bahrain following protests - BBC News. (2011, March 1). Retrieved July 20, 2015, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12729786>

leaving at least seven protestors dead.<sup>89</sup> The White House urged Bahrain to “exercise maximum restraint, condemn the use of excessive force and indiscriminate use of tear gas against protestors [which had been a cause of civilian casualties],” and to engage in an open dialogue with opposition parties.<sup>90</sup> Despite this, Human Rights Watch and Bahrain’s Shiite Opposition groups blamed the U.S. for going easy on the use of excessive force that left protestors dead.<sup>91</sup>

Bahrain houses ten U.S. defense facilities with over 8,500 Americans.<sup>92</sup> According to the Department of Defense (DOD), the facilities include:

1. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain,
2. NSA Bahrain Aviation Unit Muharraq,
3. NSA Bahrain Banz Wrhs Compound,
4. NSA Bahrain Dependent School,
5. NSA Bahrain Mina Sulman Pier Area,
6. Nsa-il
7. Sheik Isa, and
8. 3 other unidentified sites<sup>93</sup>.

NSA-Bahrain is the headquarters for America’s Fifth Fleet, which facilitates maritime activity in the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and much of the waters off eastern Africa since 1995.<sup>94</sup> NSA-Bahrain base is expensive and currently

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> The White House Office of the Press Secretary Statement on the Situation in Bahrain. (2012, April 11). Retrieved July 21, 2015, from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/11/statement-press-secretary-situation-bahrain>

<sup>91</sup> Gulf states send forces to Bahrain following protests - BBC News. (2011, March 1).; CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013; 22) 16.

<sup>92</sup> Abrams, Elliott. (Feb. 27, 2015) How Obama Caved on Bahrain. Foreign Policy. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/27/how-obama-caved-on-bahrain-manama-human-rights/>

<sup>93</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Base Structure Report FY 2014 Baseline: A Summary of the Real Property Inventory. Retrieved June 20, 2015, from <http://www.acq.osd.mil/ie/download/bsr/Base%20Structure%20Report%20FY14.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013;

undergoing an estimated \$580 million construction program that will double the size of the facility by adding new administration buildings, barracks, warehousing, and dining facilities by 2017.<sup>95</sup> A previous construction program expanded the Shaykh Isa Airbase (or Sheik Isa) to increase its storage space for more surveillance aircrafts, and another 19 million was spent to “for a U.S. Special Operations Forces facility.”<sup>96</sup> Additionally, the base continues to increase its number of minesweepers (i.e. mine-sweeping helicopters) and coastal patrol ships to combat illegal trafficking across the Arabian Sea.<sup>97</sup> Considering the increasing costs to expand U.S. bases in Bahrain, the country’s stability should be assessed to not only warn against the possibility that American defense forces could be expelled but to also gauge the safety for Americans in the country.

Defense Secretary Hagel noted contingency planning for Bahrain in the possibility that “threats to U.S. personnel, instability of Bahrain’s government, or the accession of a new regime that expels the U.S. presence” occurs.<sup>98</sup> Although it is has not been confirmed by the DOD, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) named likely contingency sites for America’s Naval headquarters to include Kuwait’s Shuaiba Port, Qatar’s New Doha Port, or the United Arab Emirates (UAE)’s Jelbel Ali space.<sup>99</sup> Despite contingency planning, the increased spending on construction projects in Bahrain is a concern.

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McDaniel, Commander Richard. (2013, June 1). Policy Paper: No “Plan B” U.S. Strategic Access in the Middle East and the Question of Bahrain. Retrieved July 1, 2015, from <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/06/24-us-strategic-access-middle-east-bahrain-mcdaniel/24-us-strategic-access-middle-east-bahrain-mcdaniel.pdf>

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 21-22

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 22

<sup>97</sup> CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013; 22.

<sup>98</sup> Quote. Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

### *Historical Instances of American Forces Forced Out*

History identifies instances when American forces were forced out of foreign countries by either a foreign government consensus or rising domestic instability including the U.S.' expulsion from the Philippines in 1991 and the evacuations from Yemen in 2015. While the Philippine government peacefully enforced America's exit, a forced evacuation was implemented in Yemen, due to safety concerns, resulted from increasing violence between non-state groups. On December of 1991, the Philippine government served the United States a one- year notice to withdraw completely from the Subic Bay Naval Base.<sup>100</sup> The notice to evacuate resulted from Philippine government disagreements over U.S. economic aid and the Subic Bay lease treaty. A year does not force immediate evacuation of U.S troops, but a year may not be enough time to replace such a strategic naval base. The Subic Naval Base was a supply and ship repair installation.<sup>101</sup> While there are no American bases in the Philippines, there are 32 military personnel located at an unidentified location in the Philippines.<sup>102</sup> Although there are no American defense facilities in Yemen, the DOD does report to have some military personnel in an unidentified location.<sup>103</sup> Although rising tensions in Yemen led to a

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<sup>100</sup> Bayoneto, Victoria. "The Former U.S. Bases in the Philippines: An Argument for the Application of U.S. Environmental Standards to Overseas Military Bases." *Fordham Environmental Law Review* 6.1 (2011): 11-155. Print.

<sup>101</sup> Sanger, David. (1991, December 28). Philippines Orders U.S. to Leave Strategic Navy Base at Subic Bay. *The NYTimes*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/28/world/philippines-orders-us-to-leave-strategic-navy-base-at-subic-bay.html>

<sup>102</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Base Structure Report FY 2014

<sup>103</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Base Structure Report FY 2014



“relocation of the U.S. embassy staff from the Capitol City of Sanaa for safety precautions, a number of military personnel were left behind, some to help train Yemen’s forces against rival groups.”<sup>104</sup>

## **Literature Review**

### *Theories for the Growth of State Fragility in the Middle East*

Academic literature provides various causes for instability in the Middle East but this literature review will outline the three most occurring theories for the region. One theoretical cause focuses on the policy failures of western country intervention seeking to contain the conflict. John Bew, Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, noted how the U.S. became so entrenched in the region that once it began pulling out it created a vacuum that regional states are attempting to fill.<sup>105</sup> The competition to fill this vacuum has only worsened the situation. Additionally, the Sykes-Picot protocol, crafted by Britain and France, divided the Middle Eastern region up by drawing many of the state borders seen today. While the Sykes-Picot protocol failed to reach to the island now known as Bahrain, non-state organizations such as the Islamic State Organization hope to form a caliphate that eliminates those very borders and have increased sectarian tensions that transcend Bahrain’s borders today.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Elbagir, Nima. (2015, April 20). Stranded in Yemen: Americans left to find own way out

<sup>105</sup> Library of Congress Profile on John Bew. (n.d.). Retrieved July 20, 2015, from <http://www.loc.gov/loc/kluge/scholars/johnbew.html> ;

Bew, John. (2014). The tragic cycle. *New Statesman*, 143(5223), 24.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

Another theoretical cause is the failure of state institutions in the region. Brian Dooley, Director for Human Rights First Defenders Program, notes the insufficiency of some Middle East state institutions to adequately provide for its population. This explanation finds that instability in the region

“stems from long-simmering problems that undermined state institutions and provoked widespread discontent among youthful, more mobilized populations. The parts of the region that are most disordered today are those where leaders, having rejected reforms and provoked popular uprisings, then sought to repress their angry citizens through overwhelming force. As the state turned against its own citizens, and as institutions of basic governance and community order failed, sectarian militias, terrorism, and civil war filled the void.”<sup>107</sup>

Additionally, a third theoretical cause is sectarianism and ethnic tension in the region. Former Turkish Ambassador to Baghdad, Murat Ozelik notes that radical Shia and Sunni jihadist groups, with distorted views of Islam, exploit these tensions to increase political influence and leverage in the region.<sup>108</sup> Sectarianism, or discrimination between radical Sunni and Shia factions have been “fomented and further exacerbated by respective state backing of Iran and Saudi Arabia” and has further destabilized the Middle East.<sup>109</sup>

These theories are interesting when examining the state fragility of Bahrain and its effect on U.S. bases there. While one theory places the blame for Middle East instability on domestic institutions, another focuses on Western intervention, while a third blames sectarianism. While there could be numerous reasons for a state’s instability,

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<sup>107</sup> Quote. Cofman, Tamara. (2015, March 2). America's allies in the Middle East create as many problems as they solve. Retrieved July 5, 2015, from <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/order-from-chaos/posts/2015/03/02-friends-americas-allies-middle-east-create-problems-solve-wittes>

<sup>108</sup> Ozelik, Murat. The Two Radical Sources of Instability in the Middle East. (2014, August 15). Retrieved July 5, 2015, from [http://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global\\_memos/p33347](http://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global_memos/p33347)

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

these three causes were the most reoccurring throughout literature. This paper touches on all three perspectives as the Fragile State Index used to measure Bahrain's fragility observes issues such as Bahraini institution failures, sectarian/ethnic tension, and foreign intervention. All of these aspects are vital when examining Bahrain's suitability for a U.S. presence and military base.

## **Methodology**

This examination will measure the state fragility of Bahrain using the Fragile State Index, previously known as the Failed State Index, which is an annual ranking system of "nations based on their levels of stability and the pressures they face."<sup>110</sup> While this index measures normal pressures that all states face to include issues with demographic pressures (e.g. natural disasters, pollution, disease, etc.), group grievance (e.g. discrimination, ethnic violence, etc.), and others, it aims to measure or predict when certain pressures begin to push "a state toward the brink of failure."<sup>111</sup> Using the index's scores and top indicators (i.e. destabilizing issues), Bahrain will be observed since 2005, the index's inception, to help determine its largest issues and suitability for U.S. bases.

The index uses a Conflict Assessment Software Tool (CAST) to analyze 12 issue areas within a state's social, economic, political, and military realms to determine which

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<sup>110</sup> "FFP Fragile State Index 2014." Foreign Policy Magazine (July-August Edition). The Fund for Peace.3.

<sup>111</sup> Haken, N., & Taft, P. (2015, June 17). Fragile States Index 2015: The Book. Retrieved July 15, 2015, from <http://library.fundforpeace.org/fsi15-report>

pressures are the most destabilizing.<sup>112</sup> *Full descriptions of all 12 indicators are provided in Appendix A.* This examination will only identify Bahrain’s indicators with the highest three scores to assess its role in the country’s fragility. Individual indicator scores can range between zero to ten, with zero meaning most stable and ten meaning least stable. These indicator scores are combined to create the overall Fragile State index score which is “interpreted with the understanding that the lower the score, the better. Therefore, a reduced score indicates an improvement, just as a higher score indicates greater instability.”<sup>113</sup> The highest overall index score is 120 as there are 12 indicators with a maximum limit of ten. For example, in 2014, Finland was the most stable with a score of 18.7 while South Sudan was the least stable with a score of 112.9. In 2005 and 2012, more than three indicators are listed because two or more indicators shared the same score. Identifying Bahrain’s most destabilizing pressures highlight target areas that require additional attention in effort to stabilize Bahrain and ensure its suitability for U.S. bases.

## Results

**Figure 1: Bahrain’s Fragile State Index Scores and Indicators**

Year	Fragile Score	Top 3 Indicators
2005	85.6	SL, FE, and HF& UED & SEC
2006	146 countries were assessed and	

<sup>112</sup> “FFP Fragile State Index 2014.” Foreign Policy Magazine (July-August Edition). The Fund for Peace.10.

<sup>113</sup> “Ibid.

	Bahrain was not included.	
2007	57.0	SL, GG, FE
2008	56.8	SL, GG, FE
2009	59.0	SL, GG, FE
2010	58.8	SL, GG, FE
2011	59.0	SL, GG, FE
2012	62.2	SL, GG, and HR & FE
2013	62.9	SL, HR, GG
2014	64.7	SL, HR, GG

**SL** State Legitimacy

**FE** Factionalized Elites

**HR** Human Rights and Rule of Law

**UED** Uneven Economic Development

**GG** Group Grievance

**SEC** Security Apparatus

Bahrain's fragile state score has overall decreased since 2005 with a major decline in 2007, which means that the country is more stable in 2014 than it was in 2005 despite a rise in instability since 2011. To answer the question of what issues are the most destabilizing to Bahrain, the index has highlighted Bahrain's top three indicators since 2013, which are state legitimacy (SL), human rights (HR), and group grievances (GG). Another reoccurring indicator since 2005 are factionalized elites (FE) issues. These indicators will be further explained below as well as the threat they pose to the safety and security of U.S. bases.

In 2013 and 2014, state legitimacy (SL) indicators involve issues with government corruption, government effectiveness, political participation, and the

electoral process.<sup>114</sup> There have been uprisings in the country as a result of Bahrain's electoral process as the government has been criticized for corruption and gerrymandering voting districts.<sup>115</sup> The Al-Khalifa regime created an Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) to investigate human right abuses following the excessive response to demonstrations in June 2011 that left seven protestors dead.<sup>116</sup> The BICI called for a public forum in which reforms were raised pertaining to the COR's political power, electoral boundaries procedures, and government corruption.<sup>117</sup> Despite disapproval from some Shiite opposition groups on the forum and reform proposals, the BICI reforms were implemented in May 2012.

Human rights and rule of law (HR) is the second ranking issue in Bahrain. HR indicators involve issues of civil liberties, human trafficking, incarceration, torture, executions, and etc.<sup>118</sup> The large 2011 demonstrations in Bahrain that led to neighboring Sunni state intervention used excessive force killing protestors in the process.<sup>119</sup> Additionally, there has been instances of executions and torture that have caused uprisings as a Bahraini Court upheld "a sentencing to death by firing squad" of a Bangladesh citizen, and the Human Rights Watch and Department of State have made allegations that Bahraini security forces use torture and cruel punishment.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> "FFP Fragile State Index 2014."10

<sup>115</sup> CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013)

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> FFP Fragile State Index 2014."10

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013) 20.

Group grievance (GG) are the third ranking indicator and involves tension and violence between certain groups and involves issues of discrimination, sectarian or religious violence.<sup>121</sup> As Shiites feel as though as they are not accurately represented within the government and continue to demand more democracy, tensions between the Sunni elites and Shiite majority grow. Discrimination against Shiites has caused tension as well. Another large and reoccurring issue from 2005 until 2012 is factionalized elites (FE), which involves power struggles and flawed elections.<sup>122</sup> COR elections take place every four years, and have been “marked by substantial tension over perceived government efforts to prevent election of a Shiite majority.”<sup>123</sup>

## Discussion

While Bahrain’s most destabilizing issues have been addressed, to what extent do they threaten the safety and security of U.S. bases? The increasing instability can threaten U.S. presence in the country as Al-Khalifa resistance groups use violence to challenge the regime. Not to mention the increasing violent clashes between police and protestors.<sup>124</sup> Some Shiite militant groups opposed to the regime include the (1) Bahraini Hezbollah, a Hezbollah branch that supports and takes orders from the Iranian government since 1980; (2) Saraya al-Ashtar, a Bahraini terrorist group that has claimed credit for over 20 bombings against security personnel; (3) Saraya al-Muqawama al-Shabiya, or Popular Resistance Brigades, another terrorist group of Bahrain that has carried out terrorist attacks in malls, banks, airports, etc.; and (4) Saraya al-Mukhtar, although not listed as a

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<sup>121</sup> FFP Fragile State Index 2014.”10

<sup>122</sup> FFP Fragile State Index 2014.”10

<sup>123</sup> Quote. CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013) 3.

<sup>124</sup> Johnson, Hank. (2014, July 22). Trouble with Bahrain.

terror group, has claimed attacks on Bahrain security to include improved explosive device (IED) attacks.<sup>125</sup>

There have been instances of terrorist attacks targeting U.S. military bases in Bahrain. For example, the Popular Resistance Brigades claimed responsibility for detonating an IED near the U.S. military base in Bahrain where the Fifth Fleet is headquartered.<sup>126</sup> As non-state groups have targeted security forces and U.S. military installations, these groups' use of such tactics can increase in severity and occurrence as Bahrain's instability increases. Considering the multiple travel warnings issued by the Department of State that declare "growing swaths of the country as off limits to U.S. service members and their families amid reports of regular, violent clashes,"<sup>127</sup> Bahrain's instability and its housing of U.S. military bases should remain a concern of DOD and policymakers until tensions settle between the Al-Khalifa regime and its resistance.

According to the Fragile State index, although Bahrain was more stable in 2014 than in 2005, its fragility score has increased since 2011 following Egypt's overthrow of its ruler. Although Shiite and regime opposition groups have called for King Al-Khalifa to step down, American military experts have repeatedly stated the importance of maintaining a presence in Bahrain by ensuring that the current monarchy (the Khalifa family) is maintained.<sup>128</sup> If maintaining the Khalifa monarchy is a necessity, not only has this chapter provided the most destabilizing issues within Bahrain but it has also provided

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<sup>125</sup> Levitt, Matthew. (2014, May 16). Iran and Bahrain: Crying Wolf, or Wolf at the Door? Retrieved July 16, 2015, from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iran-and-bahrain-crying-wolf-or-wolf-at-the-door>

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Quote. Johnson, Hank. (2014, July 22). Trouble with Bahrain

<sup>128</sup> McDaniel, Commander Richard. (2013, June 1). Policy Paper: 2.



a ranking agenda that U.S. policymakers can consider in order to stabilize Bahrain and the Al-Khalifa regime. U.S. policymakers should continue to push for Shiite-Sunni equality on issues such as state legitimacy, human rights, and group grievances that have had the largest impact on Bahrain's rising instability. The U.S. can leverage its large military presence, security cooperation, and arms trade to better persuade the Al-Khalifa regime to enact significant reforms. The White House has been vocal in asking that the Bahraini regime engage in open dialogue with opposition groups. Although the BICI held a public forum, the main opposition group known as the Wifaq left the talks and did not participate.<sup>129</sup> The U.S. should continue to push for talks between the regime and the Wifaq while using its trade arms trade as leverage.

The U.S. government and human rights organizations have been active on Bahrain's human rights issues even publically opposing Bahrain's use of excessive force in the 2011 demonstrations and temporarily withheld arms sales to the government on weapons used protestors. American policymakers and human right organization should continue to publicize human rights violations and openly oppose the use of excessive force and torture. Additionally, the U.S. should push that the Bahraini government allow human rights organizations to continuously monitor its actions as the government has prevented groups such as the Human Rights Watch from working in the country.<sup>130</sup>

Additionally, the Fragile State Index shows a rising fragility score every consecutive year since 2011, but the DOD continues to fund expansion projects for the

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<sup>129</sup> CRS. Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy (CRS Report 95-1013) 20.

<sup>130</sup> Bahrain: An Unfolding Human Rights Crisis. (2011, July 5). Human Rights Watch. Retrieved July 21, 2015, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/05/bahrain-unfolding-human-rights-crisis>

NSA-Bahrain naval base. Although it could be understood if DOD increased spending toward security projects, training, and weapons to strengthen against increasing instability, expanding its bases with new building such as dining facilities could be perceived as a misuse of tax dollars. Perhaps the DOD should consider holding off on non-essential construction projects in Bahrain with no relation to security until tensions between the regime and opposition blocs are eased. Domestic tensions could continue to worsen and make the country unsafe for America's presence

## **Conclusion**

Bahrain is one of America's closest GCC allies as it hosts the Navy's Fifth Fleet and provides a strategic location for American forces with its close proximity to Iran. It is a critical ally in securing American interests in oil, natural gas, and maritime trade in the Gulf region as well. Because the country houses ten American military facilities including the Naval headquarters NSA Bahrain and over 8,500 Americans, the stability of the country is vital as rising domestic tensions can increase the threat posed to U.S. bases inside the country. Looking to past situations in Yemen and the Philippines when the U.S. was forced out and the rising fragility in Bahrain, the possibility of increasing attacks targeting U.S. bases in Bahrain are a concern. Considering the rising instability in Bahrain, although better than it was in 2005, the DOD should strive to stabilize the country and continue to push that substantial political reforms are made by the Al-Khalifa regime to appease its majority opposition blocs before further expanding the currently large NSA-Bahrain Base.

## **Chapter Three. The Threat of Foreign Fighters: An Assessment of Foreign Fighter Involvement in Terrorist Attacks in the United States**

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*“Thousands of foreigners—including Europeans and some Americans” have joined ISIS militants ... these fighters, trained and battle-hardened, could return to their home countries and carry out deadly attacks.<sup>131</sup>”*

**-President Barack Obama**

### **Introduction**

The alleged increasing threat of foreign fighters to the West has gained the attention of American news outlets and the agendas of many policymakers, to include President Obama. The primary concern with foreign fighters is the possibility that these individuals may return to their home countries after gaining combat training or war experience and engage in terrorist activity. The threat posed by western foreign fighters is certainly recognized by both sides, as terrorist groups see the advantage of these volunteers and repeatedly call for Westerners to assist in and support attacks against the West. For example, Mike Morell, former CIA Deputy Director, notes that the Khorasan group, Jabat al-Nusra’s operationally experienced member arm that contains 50-100 operatives, focuses primarily on attacking the West.<sup>132</sup> The group has “safe havens in Syria where they plan external attacks, construct and test improvised explosive devices, and recruit westerners to conduct operations” rather than helping efforts to topple the Assad regime; this played a major role in the recent U.S. decision to conduct the

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<sup>131</sup> Daniel Byman. (2014, September 30). Homeward Bound? Don't Hype the Threat of Returning Jihadists. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2014/09/30-syria-foreign-fighters-byman-shapiro>

<sup>132</sup> Christopher M. Blanchard. (2014). The "Khorasan Group" in Syria. *Congressional Research Service: Report*, 10.

September 22 strikes as policymakers aimed to prevent an imminent attack against the homeland by this group and other similar groups.<sup>133</sup>

History shows that the influx of Western foreign fighters toward Muslim conflict is nothing new as a large number of Western individuals flocked toward Afghanistan in the 1980's during the Soviet invasion. There is estimated to be at least 2,000 Western foreign fighters who've traveled to the conflict in Iraq and Syria, most of them in support of al Qaeda (AQ) or the Islamic State Organization (IS).<sup>134</sup> While the number of western fighters who migrated toward Afghanistan in the 80's had been the largest to date, there are now more Westerners in Syria and Iraq than there once were in Afghanistan.<sup>135</sup>

American policymakers are concerned that foreign fighters will return home to carry out terrorist attacks in the U.S., but how likely is this to actually occur? This paper focuses on the question, "How likely is that foreign fighters can carry out successful terrorist attacks within the U.S." and examines western foreign fighters involvement in terrorists' plots and attacks in the U.S. It was found that the threat is overstated, as there was no western foreign fighter involvement in any terrorist attack occurring in the U.S. from 1991 until 2013.

## **Key Definitions**

Before beginning this assessment, a definition of Western foreign fighter is critical in the understanding of this article. The term 'western' means "individuals

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Jenkins, Brian Michael. (2014). When Jihadis Come Marching Home. RAND Corporation. 5.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

coming from the U.S., Canada, European Union States, Australia, and New Zealand.”<sup>136</sup>

This chapter will focus primarily on individuals from the U.S to include U.S. citizens by birth, naturalization, as well as those individuals with legal residency status or who has resided in the states for over three years. Thomas Hegghammer, Director of Terrorism Research at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, gives a comprehensive definition for foreign fighter as he distinguishing between domestic fighters and foreign fighters.<sup>137</sup> Hegghammer defines domestic fighters as individuals who perpetrate or attempt to perpetrate violence in the West, while foreign fighters are individuals who leave or attempt to leave the West to fight somewhere else.<sup>138</sup> He also states that foreign fighting includes any

“military activity (training or fighting), using tactic (terrorist or guerilla tactics), against an enemy (western or non-western)—so long as it occurs outside the West; co-ethnic war volunteers, for example, American Iraqis going to Iraq, are counted as foreign fighters.”<sup>139</sup>

This chapter will use Hegghammer’s definition of foreign fighters to access the threat posed by Islamic foreign fighters to America.

As the Islamic State of the Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) or the Islamic State Organization (IS) is the new current threat of 2014 with its successful terrorist attacks and

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<sup>136</sup> Jeanine de Roy Van Zuijdewijn, J. (n.d.). Fearing the Western Muslim Foreign Fighter: The Connection between Fighting the Defensive Jihad and Terrorist Activity in the West. Thesis.4.

<sup>137</sup> David Malet. “Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts,” Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 2009.

<sup>138</sup> Thomas Hegghammer. (2013). Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting. *American Political Science Review*, 107(1).

<sup>139</sup> Quote. Ibid. 1

growing land occupation, there is a concern among policymakers that the organization will radicalize its growing and newly recruited western fighters with the group's anti-American ideology and order them to return home to carry out attacks. This, in turn, could result in a serious peril but the extent of this threat in the United States has yet to be explored. While ISIS or IS goes by multiple names, for the sake of consistency, the group will be referred to as the Islamic State Organization or IS throughout this paper.

Additionally, the organization known as Al-Qaeda will be referenced and used in gathering and analyzing terrorist incidents in America. The group is significant when studying the trends of foreign fighters, as it has played a major role in the recruitment of fighters since the Soviet invasion in the 1980's. When the term 'Al Qaeda' is used, it will reference both its direct affiliates, and indirect affiliates. Its direct affiliates include Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Nusrah Front, and Al Shabaab.<sup>140</sup> These four groups have been formally accepted by the group and have pledged allegiance to the group's leader Ayman al Zawahiri. Al Qaeda's indirect affiliates include the Islamic State Organization, Al Murabitoun, Boko Haram, Ansar al Sharia, and Ansar Bayt al Maqdis.<sup>141</sup> These groups have not been formally accepted by al Zawahiri but may "have organizational links or ideological similarities with Al Qaeda or its affiliates and pose a credible threat to U.S. interests."<sup>142</sup>

This chapter seeks to measure the involvement of western foreign fighters in terrorism within the U.S. as well as the lethality of these terrorist acts. It will also

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<sup>140</sup> U.S. Congressional Research Service. Al-Qaeda Affiliated Groups: Middle East and Africa. CRS Report R43756. Congressional Research Digital Collection. Available from: LexisNexis® Congressional. Accessed 11/1/2014.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Quote. Ibid.

examine jihadi-inspired terrorist attacks in the U.S. with foreign fighter involvement and their resulting casualties. While IS is relatively new and has yet to conduct any terrorist attacks within American borders, there is no available data on this aspect so al-Qaeda will be used as a case study. Assessing al-Qaeda's foreign fighter involvement in terrorism sheds some light on the perceived threat that IS' foreign fighters can potentially cause.

But what exactly is considered terrorism involvement? While terrorism is the use of violence toward civilians for a political purpose, individuals can be involved in terrorism directly or indirectly. Direct involvement is the active participation in the terrorist activity (i.e. detonating the bomb) while indirect involvement is the facilitation or finance of terrorist activity.<sup>143</sup> For this purpose of this examination, terrorist involvement will refer to both those actively involved in terrorist attacks as well as those who support attacks indirectly by way of recruitment or finance. Western foreign fighters with any known connections to terrorist attacks, whether it is providing material or financial support to attacks, will be evaluated.

As key definitions have been explained, this chapter is separated into four parts. First, a literature review will follow that will explore current academic literature surrounding foreign fighters throughout history and the many theories that help to explain the increase of and reasons for foreign fighter occurrence, especially the Western foreign fighter. Second, a methodology section will measure Western foreign fighter involvement in terrorism within the U.S. Third, the chapter will explain the research results pertaining to foreign fighter participation in attacks in the U.S. Fourthly, the chapter will discuss the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid. Jeanine. Fearing the Western Muslim Foreign Fighter. 5.;

threat of Western foreign fighters as well as its impact on policy decisions and existing literature.

## **Literature Review**

Currently, news sources continue to share concern on the increasing number of Syrian Western foreign fighters (or individuals from the West who have left or attempt to leave to fight in Syria), especially IS' recruitment of these individuals, yet there is little academic literature or statistics that examine the probability of this threat to the United States. Although there is little open-source information on this topic, it is logical to say that the possibility of foreign fighters returning home to engage in terrorist activity is just that, possible, but very little literature actually attempts to observe just how likely this possibility may be. Most literature on western foreign fighters focuses on western society to include European Union states (EU), the U.S., Canada, Australia, and some others as a conglomerate but the threat of foreign fighters to the U.S., solely, is understudied.

The number of foreign fighters that join Islamic conflict in the Middle East and Africa continues to rise and while some literature has observed the increase in foreign fighters over time, very few have attempted to explain the reasons behind this growth. Thomas Hegghammer, a senior research fellow at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), conducted a study on al-Qaida's transnational empowerment in relation to the rise of foreign fighters in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Thomas Hegghammer. (2010). The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters. *International Security*, 53(3), 53-94.



Hegghammer is a prominent expert of foreign fighter trends as his research reoccurs throughout a large portion of existing foreign fighter literature.

Not only did Hegghammer emphasize the role that war volunteering played in a majority of al-Qaida operatives' experience in basic militancy but he also emphasized how this volunteering was "a stepping stone in individual involvement for more extreme forms of militancy," as he says "when Muslims in the West radicalize, they usually do not plot attacks in their home countries right away, but travel to a war zone first."<sup>145</sup> Hegghammer focuses on Western Muslims (Muslim individuals from the previously mentioned western states) as they create the large majority of western foreign fighters who join Muslim conflicts abroad. Hegghammer found that through influential al-Qaida leaders, notably Abdallah Azzam and Osama Bin Laden, that foreign fighter and jihad doctrines were established that called for collective duty and Muslim obligation to fight whether residing in the local area of conflict or outside.<sup>146</sup> This ideology of collective duty coupled with non-Muslim intervention in Muslim areas is a possible cause for heightened foreign fighters occurrence in Islamic conflict areas. In addition to the large number of foreign fighters who flocked toward Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion, two other major conflict instances that attracted transnational fighters include the Bosnian conflict in the 1990's and Somalia conflict in the 2000's.

Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewjin, a research assistant at the Centre for Terrorism and Counter-terrorism (CTC), challenges Hegghammer's measurement of foreign fighter

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<sup>145</sup> Quote. Ibid. 53.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. 71-77.

involvement in terrorism as she argues that his original measurement of individuals labeled as foreign fighters was too broad and failed to differentiate between foreign fighters and foreign trainees. Van Zijdewijn holds that “individuals who go abroad to merely train for terrorist activity in the West should not be called foreign fighters.”<sup>147</sup> Her emphasis on the distinction between foreign fighters and foreign trainees narrows the number of individuals classified as foreign fighters in Hegghammer’s study and alters the measure that 1 out of 4 Western Muslim foreign fighters were involved in terrorist activity in Europe to 1 out of 11, making it significantly smaller.<sup>148</sup> Jeanine’s distinction between foreign fighters and foreign trainees is not important for this study as it follows Hegghammer’s definition which includes both foreign fighter and foreign trainees as individuals engaged in foreign fighting.

A study conducted by the CTC of the Leiden University in the Netherlands explored documented cases of known foreign fighters since 1980 and highlighted eight different paths that these returnees took after the conflict. Although there are various foreign fighter pathway theories throughout literature, this theory seems to be the most simple and comprehensive. They note that their study is more anecdotal, as there is a lack of empirical data, and tracing a total or large portion of the returning fighters is nearly impossible.<sup>149</sup> From their study, it was found that returning fighters have taken one of the eight paths to include:

1. Death;

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<sup>147</sup> Jeanine de Roy Van Zijdewijn, J. (n.d.). Fearing the Western Muslim Foreign Fighter: The Connection between Fighting the Defensive Jihad and Terrorist Activity in the West. Thesis.10.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid Jeanine de Roy Van Zijdewijn & Bakker, Edwin. 9.

2. Staying in the country to become a resident and live in peace;
3. Staying in the country and becoming involved in terrorist activity;
4. Returning to home country and reintegrate;
5. Returning to home country/or another western country and becoming involved in terrorist activity;
6. Returning to a non-western country to continue to fight and remain committed to the global jihad;
7. Traveling to a non-western country and becoming involved in terrorist activity;
8. And traveling to a non-western country and peacefully reintegrating.<sup>150</sup>

Although these eight pathways have been identified, it remains unknown which pathway is more likely to occur as this project aimed toward identifying pathways. Examining the reasoning behind these different pathway choices can help governments “formulate more adequate policy responses and more specific threat assessments with regard to returnees... as it is shown that not all will come home to stage an attack, ...although there is concern for the potential high number of returning Western foreign fighters from Syria.”<sup>151</sup>

Looking to history and the Afghanistan attraction of foreign fighters in the 1980’s, there were a few cases of returning fighters with involvement in terrorist attacks in the U.S., although a large majority stayed in Afghanistan or continued jihad in Bosnia. John Berger gives a riveting account of Americans who fought in Afghanistan as well as those who

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid Jeanine. 10

engaged in terrorist activity in or against the U.S after returning home; he estimated around 150 American foreign fighters fought alongside Afghans.<sup>152</sup>

Out of the estimated 150 foreign fighters, Berger only found information on 30 cases who returned to the U.S. Three were found to have become involved with terrorist-related actions upon return.<sup>153</sup> They were:

- Clement Hampton-El was a key figure the World Trade Center Bombing of 1993.
- Wadih El Hage was involved in the U.S. Embassy bombings in 1998.
- Daniel Boyd returned home to recruit his sons and was convicted of providing material support to terrorists in 2012.<sup>154</sup>

Although Berger gives a great account of Afghanistan returned fighters who later became engaged in terrorist activity, little literature can be found that explores returned fighters from Bosnia and Somalia, specifically. There is little to no literature that compares jihadi- inspired terrorist attacks carried out by American foreign fighters post 1980 to those with foreign fighter involvement. This chapter will strive to take on this gap. While there is an adequate amount of literature that analyzes the differing routes that foreign fighters take post conflict, very little literature exists that “aims at improving our understanding of how and why foreign fighters eventually take a certain pathway after the fight.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> John Berger. *Jihad Joe: Americans Who go to War in the Name of Islam*. (Dulles: Potomac Books, Inc., 2011) 8-22.

<sup>154</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office-Eastern District of North Carolina, *North Carolina Resident Daniel Patrick Boyd Sentenced for Terrorism Violations*, 24 August 2012, <http://fbi.gov>

<sup>155</sup> Jeanine de Roy Van Zuijdewijn & Bakker, Edwin. (2014, June 1). Returning Western Foreign Fighters: The case of Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Somalia. 10.

### *Threat of Foreign Fighters*

In addition to conducting terrorist attacks in the U.S., these returnees can cause a threat to America in other ways. Despite the possibility of foreign fighters conducting terrorist attacks, Jason Burke, author and journalist for *The Guardian*, notes that most volunteers are inexperienced in war fighting and require training to become a significant threat to trained troops.<sup>156</sup> Foreign fighters can pose a threat to the U.S. by recruiting more Westerners to join, thereby prolonging the threat and possibility of these individuals targeting the West. After returning from volunteering or, in some cases, while volunteering, with the use of social media, these fighters can use their street cred to further recruit individuals and gather support for Islamic jihadists, notably al-Qaeda and its affiliates. This was the case with Omar Hammami, a radicalized convert from Alabama who joined al-Shabaab, an al-Qaeda affiliate, in Somalia. During the conflict, Hammami used the Internet, his experience, and his English speaking abilities to recruit an estimated 30 individuals to fight with the group.<sup>157</sup>

The threat posed by foreign fighters as well as an examination of the perpetrators of terrorist attacks that occurred post 1991 in the United States will be studied. As the perceived threat of Western foreign fighter is high, an examination of these instances can provide a more accurate context in which this matter can be discussed. Not only will settling this confusion allow for more efficient allocations of American resources but it

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<sup>156</sup> Jason Burke. *Al-Qaeda* (London: Penguin Books, 2007) 76.

<sup>157</sup> Anzalone, C. (2012). The Evolution of an American Jihadi: The Case of Omar Hammami. *CTC Sentinel*, 5(6). ;  
Ibid. Jeanine.

could better frame the threat of foreign fighters and their potential to conduct terrorist activity in America and aid in the formulation of American policies to restore stability in Iraq or Syria.

Of course, there is some criticism of the threat posed by foreign fighters, as Anne Stenerson, a research fellow of the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, argues that foreign fighters become more “embedded in local communities,” rather than returning home.<sup>158</sup> Despite this perspective, there are cases of foreign fighters returning home to conduct terrorist attacks. This study will focus on returnees who decide to engage in terrorist activity after returning back home to America.

## **Methodology**

Al Qaeda will be measured as a case study to help create a baseline to assess the risk level that IS can potentially pose as al Qaeda not only provides a well studied and seasoned history but also shares similar ideology to IS’ as well, despite their recent separation. For this reason, al Qaeda’s terrorist activity within America will be measured, as literature is more accessible on the group; it is also older with a strong history of drawing foreign fighters to its cause. This chapter will aim to measure al Qaeda successful and unsuccessful terrorist attacks within the United States and foreign fighter involvement in those attacks. Essentially, al Qaeda will be used to study the involvement of American foreign fighters in terrorist attacks within the states.

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<sup>158</sup> Quote. Anne Stenerson. (2011). Al Qaeda's Foot Soldiers: A Study of the Biographies of Foreign Fighters Killed in Afghanistan and Pakistan Between 2002 and 2006. *Studies In Conflict & Terrorism*, 34(3), 172.

To measure the threat level of foreign fighters in America, a list was gathered of all al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist attacks that occurred in the U.S. between 1991 and 2013. There is nothing significant about 2013; this is a limitation of the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) used to gather terrorist attacks. Only terrorist incidents post 1991 are considered because this period signaled the end of the Cold War. Also, there is existing literature on foreign fighter activity in Afghanistan pre-1991 and jihadi attacks in the U.S. were rare prior to 1991.<sup>159</sup>

As previously mentioned, the National Consortium for Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) Global Terrorism Database (GTD) was used to extract the list of al Qaeda affiliated attacks. The GTD is an open source database with over 125, 000 international events and is “currently the most comprehensive unclassified database on terrorist events in the world.”<sup>160</sup> All information in the GTD database has been pulled from verified sources and is supervised by a panel of terrorism experts.<sup>161</sup> The RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents (RDWTD), a compilation of over 40,000 global terrorist incidents, was also used as an additional form of verification for those found in the START database and to better ensure that no incidences were overlooked.<sup>162</sup> All instances were reviewed with additional sources and literature to verify these terrorist incidents. Additional research will also possibly shed light on the background of the

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<sup>159</sup> Quote Ibid. Hegghammer. Should I Stay or Should I Go? 2.

<sup>160</sup> Overview of the GTD. (2014). National Consortium for Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. Retrieved from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/about/>

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents. (2014, January 1). Retrieved from <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents.html>

perpetrators involved in these incidents as well as their motivation, and reasons for involvement.

When searching the GTD, specific search criteria was used which required that all attacks be aimed at attaining a political goal, have evidence of an intention to coerce a larger audience, and target civilians or non-combatants outside the context of legitimate warfare activities. It is important to note that all attacks toward military and law enforcement were excluded, as this study counts attacks that targeted civilians only. The specific criterion used for GTD extraction of terrorist attacks carried out in the U.S. as well as those carried by al Qaeda is listed in Appendix B and Appendix C.

In addition to measuring successful al-Qaeda terrorist attacks, documented unsuccessful attacks were observed as well with a list of unsuccessful and foiled terrorist plots from a 2013 Heritage Foundation study. There were 61 plots that occurred against the homeland after 9/11. The Heritage Foundation tracked post 9/11 terrorist plots against the states in an effort to study the evolving threat imposed to the security of the United States.<sup>163</sup> Analyzing all 61 unsuccessful Islamic terrorist plots and attempts, each event was categorized based on involved perpetrators, terrorist affiliations, and most importantly, foreign fighter involvement; the aim of this is to find what proportion of unsuccessful plots were affiliated with al Qaeda and involved foreign fighter participation.

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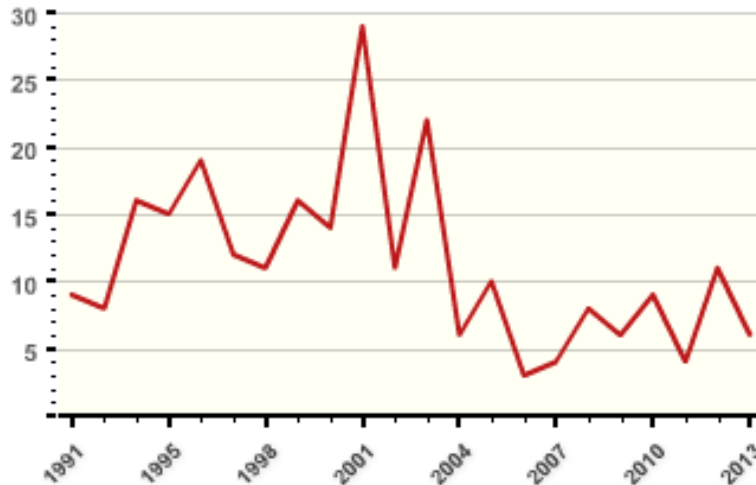
<sup>163</sup> Steven Bucci, James Jay Carafano, & Jessica Zuckerman. (2013). *60 Terror Plots Since 9/11: Continued Lessons in Domestic Counterterrorism*. Heritage Foundation.



## Results

### *Successful Terrorist Attacks*

According to the START GTD, there were a total of 249 successful terrorist attacks that occurred in U.S between 1991 and 2013. There were 29 attacks in 2001 and 22 attacks in 2003 until a significant decrease occurred after 2003 when it dropped to six attacks in 2004. It began to peak again with 12 terrorists attacks in 2012. **Figure 2** displays the total number of successful terrorist attacks that occurred between 1991 and 2013.



**Figure 2:** *Total Successful Terrorist Attacks*

### *Successful Attacks Involving Al-Qaeda*

According to the GTD, while there were 249 successful terrorist attacks that occurred in America, only four of these attacks involved perpetrators with ties to al-Qaeda. All four attacks and perpetrators associated with the 9/11 attacks involved no known western foreign fighter participation. These four attacks were tie to al-Qaeda and

claimed about 2,836 lives, not to mention the sheer amount of publicity the attacks received worldwide as the attacks were broadcasted over the media.

### *Unsuccessful Terrorist Plots Involving Foreign Fighters*

As successful al Qaeda terrorist attacks have been examined to find foreign fighter involvement, al Qaeda's attempted and/or unsuccessful terrorist attacks were reviewed as well to find any foreign fighter involvement. While there were 61 terrorist plots from 2001 until 2013 against the United States, 54 of those plots were foiled by domestic and international law enforcement before any harm was caused. 18 of these Islamist plots were affiliated with al-Qaeda. After analyzing this study, eight plots were known to have western foreign fighter involvement to include:

1. **Richard Reid**, a British citizen and supporter of al Qaeda who previously trained in Afghanistan before he attempted to ignite a shoe bomb on a flight from Paris to Miami in 2001.<sup>164</sup> (This is a unique example but it is important to note that by definition, Reid is a Western foreign fighter. He is a British citizen who left to train in a non-Western country before returning to launch an attack in the United States (a Miami destined flight).
2. **Jose Padilla**, affiliated with al Qaeda, previously trained in Pakistan with the group and received instructions to use a dirty bomb against the U.S. in 2002.<sup>165</sup>
3. **Lackawanna Six**, a group of six American citizens of Yemeni descent who trained in Afghanistan with al Qaeda in 2002. All were convicted of supporting al Qaeda, served their time and are now free in New York.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid. Steven Bucci, James Jay Carafano, & Jessica Zuckerman. (2013). *60 Terror Plots Since 9/11*. 2.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. 2.

4. **Uzir and Saifullah Paracha.** Uzair Paracha, a Pakistani citizen with permanent U.S. residency was charged with providing material and financial support to al Qaeda and planned to bomb underground gas store storage tanks in Maryland in 2003.<sup>167</sup> His father, Saifullah Paracha, a resident alien of the U.S. is currently held at Guantanamo bay for providing al Qaeda with biological and chemical explosives.<sup>168</sup>
5. **Nuradin M. Abdi,** a Somalian national affiliated with al Qaeda, resided in Ohio after he obtained fraudulent immigration documents in 2000.<sup>169</sup> After requesting immigrant travel documents for Germany and Saudi Arabia, Abdi planned “to attend military style terrorist training camp in Ethiopia in hopes of carrying out jihad in the U.S.”<sup>170</sup> Abdi was charged in a plot to bomb a local Ohio shopping mall shortly after his return to the U.S.
6. **Hamid Hayat,** an American citizen of Pakistani descent, previously trained at an Islamic terrorist training camp in Pakistan to carry out jihad in the U.S.<sup>171</sup> He was found guilty of providing material support to terrorists and providing false statements to the FBI in 2005.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 3

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 3

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 4

<sup>170</sup> Jeff Garvas. (2014, June 14). Al Qaeda Cell in Ohio? FBI Says Suspect Plotting To Blow Up Columbus Mall. Retrieved from <https://ohioccw.org/200406142108/al-qaeda-cell-in-ohio-fbi-says-suspect-plotting-to-blow-up-columbus-mall.html>

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. Steven Bucci, James Jay Carafano, & Jessica Zuckerman. (2013). *60 Terror Plots Since 9/11*. 5.

7. **Najibullah Zazi**, affiliated with al Qaeda, moved to the U.S from Pakistan when he was teen and became a naturalized American citizen.<sup>172</sup> After training at an al Qaeda camp in Pakistan, he plotted to bomb New York City's subway with four other individuals in 2009.<sup>173</sup>
8. **Faisal Shahzad**, "a naturalized citizen from Pakistan attempted to detonate explosives in an SUV parked in Times Square in 2010...after receiving explosive training in Pakistan."<sup>174</sup> Although there are no known ties to al Qaeda, Shahzad received training from the terrorist organization, Tehrik-e-Taliban.<sup>175</sup>

Fortunately, all eight of these plots were either unsuccessful or foiled by law enforcement but all involved Western foreign fighter participants that threatened the national security of the U.S. Five of the eight foreign fighter involved plots are tied with al-Qaeda with the last recorded al Qaeda affiliated attempt occurring in September 2009. It is important to remember that this study was conducted in 2013 and does not account for any terrorist plots post 2013. Unsurprisingly, there is not much literature that analyzes current Islamic terror plots post 2013 as classified restrictions and current investigations may affect the accessibility of any such information.

## Discussion

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<sup>172</sup> Phil Hirschhorn. (2012, April 19). Would-be subway suicide bomber Najibullah Zazi speaks. Retrieved from <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/would-be-subway-suicide-bomber-najibullah-zazi-speaks/>

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.8.

<sup>174</sup> Quote. Ibid. 10.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

Not only is the Islamic State Organization growing financially and physically but the number of foreign fighters within their ranks continues to rise as well. But to what extent can this threaten the security of the United States? The results of this chapter not only assessed the likelihood of Western foreign fighters to carry out terrorist attacks in the U.S. but can also be used in gauging the threat posed by these experienced or jihadist-inspired individuals. As this study adds to existing foreign fighter literature and creates a foundation that new explorations on the threat of American foreign fighters can be made, it finds that western foreign fighters have been unable to carry out terrorist attacks from 1991 until 2013. Therefore the chance that western foreign fighters can successfully carry out terrorist attacks in the U.S. is less likely to occur based on the findings of this study, which are discussed further below.

### *Successful Attacks*

Comparing the number of al-Qaeda terrorist attacks and fatalities since 1991 against other terrorist groups presents some rather interesting results. Although the study of successful attacks lacked any trace of foreign fighter involvement, its results proved useful despite a lack of foreign fighter connection. There were 249 successful attacks where 3,213 individuals were killed. Of all 249 attacks, only 4 were affiliated with al-Qaeda, yet these 4 attacks claimed 2,836 lives and are responsible for the large majority of terrorist fatalities post 1991 within the U.S. That means that although al-Qaeda is responsible for about 1 out of every 62 attacks post 1991, the group can claim about 88% of total U.S. terrorism casualties in that time period.

Interesting and independent of the 9/11 attacks, the only other terrorist attack that resulted in significant casualties is the Oklahoma City bombing that occurred on April 16, 1995 and resulted in 168 casualties.<sup>176</sup> In addition to the significant threat of al-Qaeda and its affiliates, the threat of homegrown extremists such as Timothy McVeigh should continue to be assessed. The majority of terrorist attacks that occurred between 1991 and 2013 were caused by individual extremists and resulted in relatively low casualties with the exception of McVeigh's bombing.

#### *Unsuccessful Attacks and Plots*

In September 2010, before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, the U.S. intelligence community assessed that

“the range of Al Qaeda’s core, affiliated, allied, and inspired U.S. citizens and residents plotting against the homeland during the past year suggests the threat against the West has become more complex and underscores the challenges of identifying and countering a more diverse array of homeland plotting.”<sup>177</sup>

This assessment still holds to be true with 61 terrorist plots uncovered from 9/11 until December of 2013. Although domestic and international law enforcement prevented the majority of these attacks from occurring, attempted and planned attacks are still important because as it has been shown, it takes only one successful attempt to cause massive casualties and significant infrastructure damage. This asymmetrical tactic allows

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<sup>176</sup> Terror Hits Home: The Oklahoma City Bombing. (n.d.). Retrieved January 1, 2014, from <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/history/famous-cases/oklahoma-city-bombing>

<sup>177</sup> Michael Leiter. (2010). Nine years after 9/11: Confronting the terrorist threat to the homeland. *Statement before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.*

terrorists and homegrown extremists to cause significant damage with only one successful attack and minimum participants so law enforcement and intelligence communities should remain vigilant.

Unlike successful terrorist attacks, there were eight plots that involved the participation of foreign fighters while a small number of the remaining cases involved individuals who aspired to be foreign fighters which illustrates that the concern for possible Western foreign fighter involvement in attacks targeting the states is well-placed. Confidence in our security system is strengthened when one sees that all attacks that involved foreign fighters were foiled but the fact that involvement exists supports the maintenance of caution and surveillance of returning and aspiring Islamist foreign fighters. Furthermore, while there were only eight plots that involved foreign fighters, over half of them involved individual perpetrators without any affiliation to any official terrorist organization; this illustrates that the increasing rise of homegrown terrorism may play a more significant threat than returning foreign fighters as these individuals are not under surveillance and, in some cases, unsuspected.

## **Conclusion**

While the threat of foreign fighters is understood that they can use their training and fighting experience to conduct terrorist attacks, not many studies focus on this threat to the United States despite the emerging concern of American news sources and policy agendas. The Islamic State Organization has managed to create a strong American concern with its increasing Western foreign fighter ranks and seem to follow in al

Qaeda's footsteps as al Qaeda garnished large foreign fighters in the 1980's. Being a more seasoned organization, there is more available literature on al Qaeda which provides a foundation for the study of Western foreign fighters and their threat to the United States which can be referenced when assessing the threat and policy options toward IS.

Although there has been no instance of Western foreign fighter involvement in successful al Qaeda attacks within America post 1991, there have been numerous instances of foreign fighter involvement in terrorist plots against America and its citizens which goes to show that Dennis Blair, previous Director for National Intelligence, was accurate in his 2010 statement that although progress has been made against the terrorist threat to the American homeland, the danger is not gone.<sup>178</sup> He assessed that we

“ face a persistent terrorist threat from Al Qaeda and potentially others who share its anti-Western ideology. A major terrorist attack may emanate from either outside or inside the United States.”<sup>179</sup>

The threat that Blair spoke of may possibly be homegrown radicalized individuals as an increasing number of terrorist attacks and plots are attributed to these individuals.

Homegrown attacks outnumbered instances of attacks carried out by Western foreign fighters but their lethality falls short of attacks affiliated with al Qaeda and the like.

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<sup>178</sup> John Rollins.(2011) U.S. Congressional Research Service. Al Qaeda and Affiliates: Historical Perspective, Global Presence, and Implications for U.S. Policy. CRS Report R41070. Congressional Research Digital Collection. Available from: LexisNexis® Congressional. Accessed 2014.

<sup>179</sup> Quote. Ibid.



Although al Qaeda's capabilities to execute attacks on the scale of 9/11 have been significantly reduced, the emergence of similar groups with similar ideologies and goals ensure that the threat lives on. Al Qaeda managed to induce a massively destructive and fatal attack on 9/11 with minimal individuals and resources which supports that the United States should maintain or enhance its preventive law enforcement and intelligence capabilities to continue protecting the homeland. The Heritage Foundation said it best that:

“61 thwarted attacks are all examples of why continued security, prevention, and intelligence regarding counterterrorism are so vital to the safety and prosperity of the U.S. and its citizens. This is yet another reminder to the U.S. government that counterterrorism strategies must continue to evolve in order to remain one step ahead of the enemy.”<sup>180</sup>


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<sup>180</sup> Ibid. Cassandra Lucaccioni. (2013). 61st Terrorist Plot Against the U.S.

## Appendix A—Fragile State Indicator Key

As per the Fund for Peace Failed State Index website, each indicator is listed below with a brief description..


### Social and Economic Indicators

 **Demographic Pressures** **DP**

Pressures on the population such as disease and natural disasters make it difficult for the government to protect its citizens or demonstrate a lack of capacity or will.

*Includes pressures and measures related to:*


- Natural Disasters
- Disease
- Environment
- Pollution
- Food Scarcity
- Malnutrition
- Water Scarcity
- Population Growth
- Youth Bulge
- Mortality

 **Refugees and IDPs** **REF**

Pressures associated with population displacement. This strains public services and has the potential to pose a security threat.

*Includes pressures and measures related to:*


- Displacement
- Refugee Camps
- IDP Camps
- Disease related to Displacement
- Refugees per capita
- IDPs per capita
- Absorption capacity

 **Uneven Economic Development** **UED**

When there are ethnic, religious, or regional disparities, governments tend to be uneven in their commitment to the social contract.

*Includes pressures and measures related to:*


- GINI Coefficient
- Income Share of Highest 10%
- Income Share of Lowest 10%
- Urban-Rural Service Distribution
- Access to Improved Services
- Slum Population

 **Group Grievance** **GG**

When tension and violence exists between groups, the state's ability to provide security is undermined and fear and further violence may ensue.

*Includes pressures and measures related to:*


- Discrimination
- Powerlessness
- Ethnic Violence
- Communal Violence
- Sectarian Violence
- Religious Violence

 **Human Flight and Brain Drain** **HF**

When there is little opportunity, people migrate, leaving a vacuum of human capital. Those with resources also often leave before, or just as, conflict erupts.

*Includes pressures and measures related to:*

- Migration per capita
- Human Capital
- Emigration of Educated Population

 **Poverty and Economic Decline** **ECO**

Poverty and economic decline strain the ability of the state to provide for its citizens if they cannot provide for themselves and can create friction between the "haves" and the "have nots".

*Includes pressures and measures related to:*

- Economic Deficit
- Government Debt
- Unemployment
- Youth Employment
- Purchasing Power
- GDP per capita
- GDP Growth
- Inflation

## Political and Military Indicators

 <b>State Legitimacy</b> <span>SL</span> <p>Corruption and lack of representativeness in the government directly undermine social contract. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corruption</li> <li>• Government Effectiveness</li> <li>• Political Participation</li> <li>• Electoral Process</li> <li>• Level of Democracy</li> <li>• Illicit Economy</li> <li>• Drug Trade</li> <li>• Protests and Demonstrations</li> <li>• Power Struggles</li> </ul>	 <b>Public Services</b> <span>PS</span> <p>The provision of health, education, and sanitation services, among others, are key roles of the state. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policing</li> <li>• Criminality</li> <li>• Education Provision</li> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Water &amp; Sanitation</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Quality Healthcare</li> <li>• Telephony</li> <li>• Internet Access</li> <li>• Energy Reliability</li> <li>• Roads</li> </ul>	 <b>Human Rights and Rule of Law</b> <span>HR</span> <p>When human rights are violated or unevenly protected, the state is failing in its ultimate responsibility. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press Freedom</li> <li>• Civil Liberties</li> <li>• Political Freedoms</li> <li>• Human Trafficking</li> <li>• Political Prisoners</li> <li>• Incarceration</li> <li>• Religious Persecution</li> <li>• Torture</li> <li>• Executions</li> </ul>
 <b>Security Apparatus</b> <span>SEC</span> <p>The security apparatus should have a monopoly on use of legitimate force. The social contract is weakened where this is affected by competing groups. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Conflict</li> <li>• Small Arms Proliferation</li> <li>• Riots and Protests</li> <li>• Fatalities from Conflict</li> <li>• Military Coups</li> <li>• Rebel Activity</li> <li>• Militancy</li> <li>• Bombings</li> <li>• Political Prisoners</li> </ul>	 <b>Factionalized Elites</b> <span>FE</span> <p>When local and national leaders engage in deadlock and brinkmanship for political gain, this undermines the social contract. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power Struggles</li> <li>• Defectors</li> <li>• Flawed Elections</li> <li>• Political Competition</li> </ul>	 <b>External Intervention</b> <span>EXT</span> <p>When the state fails to meet its international or domestic obligations, external actors may intervene to provide services or to manipulate internal affairs. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign Assistance</li> <li>• Presence of Peacekeepers</li> <li>• Presence of UN Missions</li> <li>• Foreign Military Intervention</li> <li>• Sanctions</li> <li>• Credit Rating</li> </ul>



## Appendix B— Total Terrorist Attacks in the United States

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Global Terrorism Database Search Criteria Used- Results- 249 attacks

### SEARCH CRITERIA:

**Years:** (between 1991 and 2013)

**Criteria I:** The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal. Would you like your search results to require Criterion I to be met? (yes)

**Criteria II:** There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims. Would you like your search results to require Criterion II to be met? (yes)

**Criteria III:** The action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities, i.e. the act must be outside the parameters permitted by international humanitarian law (particularly the admonition against deliberately targeting civilians or non-combatants). Would you like your search results to require Criterion III be met? (yes)

Only incidents where there is essentially no doubt of terrorism

Including only successful attacks.

**Targets:** (Business; Government (General); Airports and Aircraft; Government (Diplomatic); Educational Institution; Food or Water Supply; Journalists & Media; Maritime; Private Citizens & Property; Religious Figures/Institutions; Telecommunication; Tourists; Transportation; Utilities)

**Country:** (United States)

**Region:** (North America)

## Appendix C— Total Al Qaeda Affiliated Terrorist Attacks in the United States

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Global Terrorism Database Search Criteria Used- Results- 4 attacks

### SEARCH CRITERIA:

**Years:** (between 1991 and 2013)

**Criteria I:** The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal. Would you like your search results to require Criterion I to be met? (yes)

**Criteria II:** There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims. Would you like your search results to require Criterion II to be met? (yes)

**Criteria III:** The action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities, i.e. the act must be outside the parameters permitted by international humanitarian law (particularly the admonition against deliberately targeting civilians or non-combatants). Would you like your search results to require Criterion III be met? (yes)

Only incidents where there is essentially no doubt of terrorism

Including only successful attacks.

**Perpetrators:** (Al-Nusrah Front; Al-Qa`ida; Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); Al-Qa`ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM); Al-Shabaab; Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)

**Targets:** (Business; Government (General); Airports and Aircraft; Government (Diplomatic); Educational Institution; Food or Water Supply; Journalists & Media; Maritime; Private Citizens & Property; Religious Figures/Institutions; Telecommunication; Tourists; Transportation; Utilities)

**Country:** (United States)

**Region:** (North America)

## **Conclusion**

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The goal of this broad thesis portfolio is to gain a better understanding and scope of the many perceived threats posed toward the United States from the Middle Eastern region. The first chapter focuses on the effect of U.S. coercive policy on Iran's nuclear program as its nuclear ambitions have caused concern among international policymakers. The second chapter examines Bahrain's most destabilizing issues to help assess its threat to the security of U.S. bases, notably the U.S. Naval Headquarters. The third chapter measures the threat of western foreign fighters to carry out terrorist attacks in the U.S as concern grows on the number of Westerners joining the fight in Middle East. The findings of this portfolio include the assertion that more coercive policies toward Iran make it more aggressive against the U.S. and more supportive of its program; and that Bahrain's most destabilizing issues pertain to state legitimacy, human rights and the rule of law, and group tensions. These major destabilizing issues increase the likelihood that Al-Khalifa opposition groups continue to target U.S. security personnel and bases. It was also found that the threat of western foreign fighters carrying out terrorist attacks in the U.S. is overstated.

While the Middle East is always a trendy topic, this thesis portfolio expanded on the existing literature that focuses on threats from the region and provides a helpful understanding on the threats of rogue nations, unstable ally regimes, and terrorism. This portfolio is also useful when making adjustments to policy decisions that pertain to the Middle East. Policy makers should consider the major results of this portfolio including

the negative effect that coercive American policies have on Iran, how Bahrain's rising instability issues threaten the security of America's expanding naval headquarters, and the overemphasized threat of foreign fighters successfully carrying out terrorist attacks in the states.

Each of the chapters was limited in specific areas and could be enhanced with future research. These limitations include the lack of information on Iran's domestic political affairs, which is something that could potentially change with acceptance of the nuclear deal and the allowance of nuclear inspectors into the country. As sanctions are lifted, a growing economy and more influential Iran could reconsider its closed society. Another research limitation experienced was the lack of public information on of American bases abroad. Initially, the second chapter was going to focus on both Kuwait and Bahrain as both countries have MNNA designation but the lack of information on Kuwait's bases made research cumbersome. The third chapter encountered research limitations on past foreign fighter information. There is very little literature that observes the possibility of foreign fighters returning home. While there may be no easy methodology to assess the likelihood of foreign fighter action, it is even more difficult to track foreign fighters.

Overall, the threat of the rogue nation is valid as states such as Iran continue to seek nuclear capabilities that transcend the limitations of the NPT. Until a cooperative and verifiable deal exists with Iran or the use of brute force completely eliminates the possibility of Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, this rogue nation will continue to be a significant threat to American interests and allies in the region. Nevertheless, this threat



can be mitigated with the use of long-term cooperation with Iran as U.S. policymakers hesitate to take direct military action in the Middle East after the invasion of the Iraq.

The threat of unstable ally regimes is valid as close GCC allies such as Bahrain experience increasing state fragility due to tensions over regime legitimacy, human rights and rule of law, and sectarianism. While the U.S. continues to expand its bases there, it needs to consider past instances of terrorist activity occurring nearby that can threaten the safety and security of its presence. Although Bahrain has not reached inhospitable conditions, the DOD should also reconsider new construction projects until the Al-Khalifa regime makes significant reforms to appease its large opposition blocs.

The threat of terrorism is valid, although the threat of foreign fighters to carry out terrorist attacks in America has been overstated in the media and by policymakers. While there is no instance of foreign fighter involvement in terrorist attacks within the U.S. between 1991 and 2013, there were eight unsuccessful terrorist plots with foreign fighter involvement signaling the need for continued surveillance by law enforcement and intelligence entities. According to the GTD, there is larger threat posed by domestic/home-grown actors rather than international terrorism as homegrown actors have carried out more successful attacks.

The primary takeaways from this portfolio include the possibility that the threat to the U.S. from the Middle East may be somewhat amplified in the news media. Iran has always been identified as a major enemy of U.S., essentially, incapable of cooperating

with the U.S. but the current nuclear deal agreement, although awaiting acceptance by the U.S. congress and Iranian counterparts is a path forward for potential future cooperation as well as an example of cooperation on an issue that was seen as a critical security concern for Iran. Clearly the threat of Iran is a real issue, however a more cooperative and negotiable strategy with the country could prove useful.

Second while instability in the region is well known, the steadily increasing instability in Bahrain seems to have little effect on DOD base expansion projects. Although the DOD has contingency sites for its operations in Bahrain in the case that conditions become too inhospitable, it continues to fund construction projects on its naval base and rely on the relationship with King Al-Khalifa despite protests calling for him to step-down. The U.S. should continue to support and aim to stabilize issues with state legitimacy, human rights, and group grievances to better ensure that the Bahrain remains stable to hold its expanding bases.

Third, clearly the threat of foreign fighters carrying out terrorist attacks in the U.S. is a real issue, however it is not the most acute concern for America today. The media overstates the threat of foreign fighters committing terrorist attacks within the states as history shows a failure of these individuals to successfully carry out attacks within the borders although there have been attempts. Policymakers should ensure the public that decisions are based on historical and factual information and that tax dollars are spent on high-priority threats. There should be more attention given to the issue of homegrown or lone-wolf terrorism as there has been more successful instances of these.

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## **Curriculum Vita**

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Jasmine Williams was born on September 16, 1989 in Chesapeake, Virginia. With a mom who served in the United States Armed Forces, she was raised in various states including Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Virginia. She completed her Bachelor's degree in Political Science at the Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia as a Magna Cum Laude Graduate in 2012. Since graduating college, Ms. Williams has had the opportunity to work with a variety of organizations to include the Executive Office of the President of the United States before working abroad in Israel. Following Israel, she has been employed as a contractor for the U.S. House of Representatives Office of the Sergeant at Arms Emergency Management Division where she works on a variety of emergency preparedness and security policies of the Capitol Complex. While participating in the Global Security Studies program at Johns Hopkins University, Ms. Williams' research interests have primarily pertained to U.S.-Iranian relations and Middle East affairs. When she is not working or studying, Ms. Williams enjoys traveling the world, sampling new cuisines, and spending time with family, close friends, and her black cat Mama.